



PHD

**The administrative politics of a micro-state: The Maltese Public Service, 1800-1940**

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THE ADMINISTRATIVE POLITICS OF  
A MICRO-STATE: THE MALTESE PUBLIC SERVICE  
1800-1940

submitted by Godfrey A. Pirotta  
for the degree of PhD  
of the University of Bath  
1991

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This study explores the development of the Maltese public service during a period that stretches from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the outbreak of World War Two, and its role, during that period, in the administrative politics of the islands. The phrase 'administrative politics' has been borrowed from Peter Self and refers to the relationship between administration and its political environment.[1] However, the term 'political environment' is used here in a much wider sense than that intended by Professor Self for it also refers to the Physical and socio-economic as well as the purely political environment. The aim of this Chapter is to map the territory that this study will be concerned with, to outline the specific aims of the research and to discuss the conceptual framework from which they have been derived. It will also examine the research methods that were available to the author.

#### WHY A STUDY OF THE MALTESE PUBLIC SERVICE?

Harrison Smith has argued that there is a 'seemingly exaggerated focus created around Maltese constitutional history.'[2] One reason for this, according to Smith, may be found in the stormy events that gave rise to the tide of constitutional ebb and flow that has characterised Maltese constitutional development.[3] As the Report of the Commission sent out to investigate Maltese political affairs in 1931 stressed, it was possible for one to plot a graph that shows the rise and fall of constitutions in Malta.[4] This process, this constitutional see-saw, even without the kaleidoscope of detail that accompanied it, may also have had a fascination for students of Maltese and colonial constitutional history. As Dennis Austin has observed, 'the single case of Malta fits uneasily' within a conceptual framework that views history as a consistently linear process, i.e. a view that argues

'that this particular set of events marked the decisive watershed of change from which there was no going back...on the transfer of power to colonial

leaders.'[5]

Another reason, perhaps, for this overwhelming concern with Maltese constitutional development may have been the domination of this process by powerful Maltese leaders. Several historians, both local and foreign, have been entranced by these colourful, if sometimes, pugnacious personalities and their impact on the constitutional ups and down of this micro-state. Austin's anticipation of 'a marvellous portrait gallery' that might be presented in the future, is indicative of this fascination.[6]

This excessive fascination with constitutional history has, however, had its drawbacks. Many areas of modern Maltese history and politics, with the exception of the history of the Malta siege during World War Two, and that of the relations between Church and State in Malta,[7] have remained virtually unexplored. There exists as yet no studies of Maltese political thought or of the system of Maltese public administration or of the Maltese public service. Studies of legal aspects of public administration do exist but these are the works of legal minds and are strictly concerned with legal issues. A leading example of such studies is 'Governmental Liability in Malta', by W.P. Gulia, once senior Crown Counsel and Lecturer in Administrative Law at the University of Malta but presently a High Court Judge.[8]

There are good reasons which explain this lack of concern with Maltese government and politics. Apart from the over concern with constitutional history noted above, there has been, traditionally, a shunning away from the 'political' by Maltese academics. This tradition began under the autocratic rule of the Order of St John which governed Malta from 1530 to 1798. The publication of any article or treatise on political matters was forbidden, as was the private ownership of printing presses.[9] This policy was continued by Britain until 1838, when the Earl of Glenelg, who at the time was Colonial secretary, approved the introduction of press freedom.[10] Until about the same time the teaching of politics as an

academic discipline had not found its place in the curriculum of the local university. A Chair of Political Economy was created in 1839, but was abolished in 1844. Its incumbent, Dr Sciortino, was dismissed shortly before the chair was suppressed because the newspaper of which he was also editor, 'Il Portafoglio Maltese', was outspoken in its criticism of the local government.[11] The local university was at the time, (and still practically is), administered like any other government department and as the Governor of the time remarked, it was 'hard that the Government should be slandered and villified by one who obtains his principal means of living from the Government.'[12] One result of this development was that the study of politics and public administration remained, until fairly recently, excluded as an academic discipline within the University of Malta.[13]

This study of the Maltese public service cannot by itself fill the enormous gaps that exist in our knowledge of Maltese political affairs or indeed of its public administration. What it seeks to do is to demonstrate in a conclusive manner the richness of available material and to lay firm foundations for other students to build upon. In its writing, no less than one hundred and forty years of original documents have been examined comprising over 800 volumes. Several issues are examined in detail while others are touched upon in sufficient detail in the hope that other related research in this area is encouraged.

#### HISTORICAL BOUNDARIES OF STUDY

The theme of this study is predominantly historical. It is a study that seeks to trace the historical development of the Maltese public service in the years 1800-1940. The year 1800 has served as a convenient departure point for quite a few historical studies about Malta.[14] This is understandable when one considers that the dawn of the nineteenth century could not have been less eventful for Malta than it was. Within the space of two years the islands had exchanged the centuries old rule of the Knights of the Order of St John, first in 1798 for that of France, and in

1800 for that of Britain.[15] The sequence of events that led to this development was both abrupt and stormy. The rule of the Order of St John which had lasted since 1530 was toppled by Napoleon within forty-eight hours and without any notable resistance.[16] That of the French lasted only two years. Indeed, French rule was only effective for a few months for the Maltese had risen in revolt against them and were, until their capitulation to the British who had come to assist the Maltese, blockaded in the city-fortress of Valletta.[17] This extraordinary train of events which culminated in 164 years of direct British rule has been viewed by some historians as the watershed which propelled Malta into the modern era.[18] It is beyond the scope of this study to explore the correctness of the latter assertion, but for other reasons, more directly related to a study of the Maltese public service, I shall also argue that the year 1800 provides a convenient departure point for this study too.

The Maltese public service was not, strictly speaking, a creation of British rule after 1800. Indeed, Chapter Two will demonstrate that there existed in Malta, prior to this period, a vast and complex administration and that the roots of some of its structures were centuries old.[19] However, when Britain took control of Malta in 1800 this administration was in ruins. The profits and revenues from Europe that had sustained this complex activity had been confiscated by France, while French invasion and Maltese insurrection had completely disrupted government activity in the islands.[20] The responsibility for reconstructing the administration of the islands and of finding new sources of revenue to sustain its activities devolved on Britain. The fact that British notions of administration were not paternalistic,[21] as had been the case with the Order, suggests that a reconstructed administration may, while retaining old structures, exhibit new directions. These issues provide a first justification.

The second justification derives from the change of status that Malta experienced after 1800. Under the Government of the Order of St John, Malta

was a de facto sovereign state.[22] The Grandmaster was vested with all the powers of government and no other sovereign had any jurisdiction over the islands. Valletta was the capital of this island-state and from it the Order administered the islands and its estates in Europe. After 1800 the status of the island changed dramatically. Under British rule Malta became no more than a dependency of Britain, part of its world-wide Empire, another extension of British sovereignty. Control and scrutiny of its administration and finances passed from Valletta to London, where they became the responsibility of a Secretary of State at Westminster.[23] On the spot, the conduct of that administration was not the responsibility of the sovereign, but of his representative. This system of administration by proxy, as it were, contrasts with the previously more direct rule of the Order, and suggests new patterns of authority structures between government and governed.

Deciding the cut-off point for this study proved, however, to be less straightforward because more than one date suggested itself. Maltese political history, after 1800, has been generally characterised by three related features. The military role played by Malta as a British fortress, was the most consistent of these features. Most British Governors tended to be military officers and the island continued to serve as a British military base, even after its independence.[24] A second feature, was the variety of Crown Colony constitutions that the island had.[25] Throughout the period 1800-1921 the status of the island remained that of a Crown Colony, some constitutions allowing for limited electoral representation. After 1921 and until independence in 1964, self-governing constitutions became an important feature of Maltese politics, but even so, Crown Colony government accounted for eighteen out of the forty three years.[26]

A third feature of Maltese political history is to be found in the island's struggle for self-government. This struggle was itself an almost constant feature of the period 1800-1921. Independence did not become an

important issue until the late 1950's, although the idea was first floated in the beginning of that decade.[27] The 1921 Constitution gave the island a watered down version of responsible government. It allowed for party competition, an elected assembly and ministerial government, but many important areas of government remained in British hands.[28] After 1880, the movement for self-government became centered on what became known as the 'language issue', i.e. Britain's attempt to replace Italian, at the time the language of education and administration, with English, and the resistance of some of the leading sectors of Maltese society to such attempts.[29]

Because of the continuity that can be discerned in the 1800-1921 period most studies of Maltese political history stop at 1921.[30] The year 1921 provided these studies with a convenient cut-off point for a study of the struggle for self-government and the intervening constitutions until this was temporarily achieved. In this case, however, using 1921 as the cut-off point for this study of the Maltese public service was inadequate since the initial intention had been to produce a historical study of the public service and Maltese public administration which will provide a basis for further research. That is, a study that examines the public service within a changing political environment, i.e. during a period of strict colonial military rule characterised by a struggle for self-government (1800-1921), during periods of self-government characterised, as they tend to be, by party competition and cabinet government (1921-33) and (1947-59), and during the transitional period to independence (1959-1964). For this reason, 1964, the year of independence appeared to be the best cut-off date that would serve such research objectives. However, given the detailed analyses required, this time period would have proved overwhelming. To do justice to detail and to capture the pattern of change and transition the period up to 1940 was used as the delineator.

Using 1940 as the cut-off point has several advantages. It allows an



examination of the public service during a period that involved two successive forms of government, Crown Colony government and self-government. The impact on the public service of the struggle for self-government and of the introduction of party competition can also be examined. An examination of the issues that were carried forward from Crown Colony Government and how these were tackled under self-government, may also provide interesting insights. For example, it would be possible to examine the impact that the language question (1880-1940) had over many aspects of the public service. This controversy was the most disrupting issue of the pre-second World War period. It created divisions in Maltese society, disrupted education and was responsible for the withdrawal of a number of 'liberal' Crown Colony constitutions between 1800-1921 and of self-government in 1933. The whole issue, however, was abruptly resolved in 1940, when the Italian airforce bombed Malta.[31] Each of these reasons provide enough justification for making 1940 the cut-off point of this research. In any case, the issues that influenced the development of the public service in the post-war period would appear to be of a different character. Rather than self-government and language they had to do with class politics, welfare and development policies, independence and the closing down of the British fortress.[32]

#### THE MAIN THEMES OF THE RESEARCH

A study that attempts to chronicle the institutional or structural development of a public service may be considered useful when, as in the case of the Maltese public service, little is known or has been written about it. The story of 'creation' and of later 'evolution' of government departments, of expanding structures, of new tasks replacing old, and of salaries and pensions, will always have to be told in any first study. But these on their own tell us very little about a public service unless they are examined and discussed within what Professor Self calls, the "administrative politics" of the system.[33] They tell us little or

nothing, for example, about the position of the administration within the overall system of government, the behaviour of public servants, or the impact of outside forces on its composition, structures and tasks. This study aims to avoid these pitfalls by relating, as observed earlier, the historical development of the Maltese public service between 1800 and 1940, to its social, economic and political environment.

As will be seen below, the themes or propositions of this research are rooted in this approach. These propositions are:

1. That for a good part of the nineteenth century, the tasks and practices of the Maltese public service remained essentially similar to those that had characterised it under the "ancien regime", and that it was in the second half of that century that the drift away from traditional structures and tasks began to make itself, however slowly, evident.

2. It will be argued that three main factors were largely responsible for this pattern of continuity and resistance to change, namely, Malta's strategic location and military role, the island's weak and dependent economy, and the small geographic size of the islands.

3. That as a result of the combination of all these aspects, the role played by the Maltese public service during the period under review in this study was of a "dirigiste" or "political-managerial" character.

#### PROPOSITION ONE

Proposition One assumes continuity. It was observed a little earlier that it will be argued in this study that the Maltese public service was not a creature of British colonial rule, but that the roots of some of its structures were centuries old. This proposition assumes that unlike the case of some other British colonies at the time of their founding, notably in North America, Africa and Australasia, the government of this archipelago was endowed with an administrative structure of a type generally found in Europe. The notion that the Maltese public service preceded the introduction of British rule in Malta inevitably raises the

question of continuity. An investigation of what structures existed and what tasks were performed becomes crucial to an understanding of developments as they occurred in the following decades. That this is so can be seen from examples furnished by other studies of both government and of administration in other countries.

Professor Birch notes, for example, that 'the development of liberal institutions changed the British political system without completely transforming it. The "chain-of-command" concept of government was superimposed on the older system of balance but the old institutions were not abolished. It is, he writes,

'not part of the British political tradition to do away with established institutions and the modern constitution abounds with practices and offices which have survived from medieval times.'[34]

Steel makes a similar point arguing that in Britain

'the system of government has developed gradually with only a few sharp breaks in its evolution. Many of the important institutions and processes have their origins in the nineteenth century and earlier.'[35]

Continuity, however, was not confined to British political and administrative institutions. Ernest Barker wrote of France that it might have been expected that the doctrines of the Revolution would 'obliterate the past...', but the past could not be shed as easily as the revolutionaries had hoped. The revolution, he argued, 'retained the administrative machine of the past, but gave it a new motive power.'[36] In a similar manner, Woodrow Wilson had argued that the French revolution had 'removed all the foundations of French politics, but scarcely any of the foundations of French administration.'[37] Support for this view comes also from Howard Machin who notes that the evolution of the French administrative system appears to have been 'a slow stable process.'[38]

In the case of the Maltese public service too, therefore, the assumption of continuity appears to be reasonable. According to Professor Vella, under the government of the Order of St John, 'the bureaucratic machinery of government became more complex and far reaching.'[39] This

'bureaucratic machine' derived its rationale from the dual role that the Order enjoyed, that is, that of Government of Malta and that of an international Order of Knights Templars. In response to the first, the Order was responsible for minting currency, financing the defence of the islands, and for the administration of the courts, the police, public works, hospitals, charitable institutions, the water supply, and the provision of grain imports.[40] As an international Order, the administration of the Order was responsible for vast estates and revenues in Europe. The profits from these estates and the revenues came into the island in different monetary form and the Order's Treasury was obliged to act as a general bank.[41] Although the events in revolutionary Europe, the expulsion of the Order from Malta, and the introduction of British colonial rule may have deprived the local administration of some of its tasks, especially those of a trans-national character, some functions would have remained unchanged.

But apart from continuity, proposition one involves a second assumption, namely, that in the latter part of the nineteenth century changes occurred which were of such a nature that the service began to shed some of its old structures and tasks. This too appears to be a reasonable assumption. As changes occurred in Britain and in the British Empire it would be fair to assume that some of these changes filtered down to the Maltese public service and that the latter too began to assume a more modern appearance. At this stage the choice of the latter part of the nineteenth century as the marker for these changes, must be seen as quite arbitrary. Its sole justification, however, rests on the fact that it was at about this time that important changes took place within the Indian and British civil service, the two bodies which may be considered as the two most important institutions in British and colonial administration. Two examples may be cited at the present juncture, i.e., the introduction of competitive examination for recruitment to the Indian Civil Service [42]

and the division in Britain (after 1870) of the general civil service into grades or classes.[43]

#### PROPOSITION TWO

Proposition two is derived from and remains concerned with the issues raised in proposition one. It sets out to identify the main factors or ingredients which constituted the environment and which, it is assumed, were responsible for such continuity within the Maltese public service. Three main factors are identified as being largely responsible. The first of these was Malta's strategic location and military role. Lying as they do at the very heart of the Mediterranean, between mainland Christian Europe and Islamic North Africa, the Maltese islands had long been considered of strategic value.[44] The arrival of the Knights of the Order of St John served to increase this strategic value. From the security of Malta's harbours, the Order's navy sallied forth to harass and attack Ottoman shipping and that of its vassals, the Barbary States.[45] The island's harbours were secured by an imposing chain of fortifications and these fortifications were to prove their worth in the great Turkish siege of 1565.[46] Recognition of Malta's strategic importance was now impressed upon many European States and some of them invested funds in its defences in order that the island may continue to carry out its fortress role in the interests of Christendom.[47]

Historical studies of nineteenth and twentieth century Malta also tend to emphasise the island's strategic importance and its role as a fortress. Koster, in his study of church and state in Malta describes British administration as fortress administration, noting that 'Wellington's assertion that Malta should be ruled as the "foredeck of an admiral's flagship" may be an extreme assertion of this policy', but the fact of the fortress conditioned much of Maltese politics.[48] This very same point is stressed by three other historians, viz Frendo, Smith, and Dobie.[49] Zammit, a sociologist, also points to the fortress as a crucial influence

in his study of power, work and class structure in Malta. He argues that Britain 'retained a narrowly defined aim towards Malta, namely, that of exploiting its strategic value.'[50] He too argues that in this respect, British policy in Malta was no more than that which had been pursued by the Order of St John. '...In important respects,' he writes, 'the British took on the role which had been left vacant by the Knights.'[51] An investigation of the influence of the fortress on the development of the Maltese public service, the pivot upon which colonial administration in Malta rested throughout the whole of British rule seems, at this stage, therefore, to be both relevant and crucial.

The second ingredient which it is said may have exercised particular influence on Maltese public administration was the island's weak and dependent economy. W.A. Charlton in his study of the Maltese economy and its effects on the demography of the island concludes that the Maltese economy had progressed from a situation of considerable dependence on outside sources of wealth in the eighteenth century to one of complete dependence by this century.[52] Charlton demonstrates that, by and large, as the nineteenth century progressed, economic activity in the islands became centred upon the fortress and other imperial interests, such as the coal bunkering trade which serviced the route to India.[53]

The fact that economic activity was so constrained might have resulted in the public service becoming a focus of attention, in different ways, to different sectors of society for work, education and other services. There is evidence to suggest, as will be developed in this study, that this is a very valid assumption. It is in this sense that the issue of the island's economy may be relevant to this study of the Maltese public service.

Finally, a third factor which is assumed to have influenced the development of the Maltese public service was the small geographic size of the islands. Smallness is a feature that has gained academic prominence over the past three decades and it can be said that the attempt to define

"smallness" is fairly recent.[54] Interest in the study of small polities has been greatly inspired by the emergence, since World War Two, of several such polities as independent states on the international stage. As a consequence, the literature on small states has been mainly concerned either with the question of viability of small states or with prescribing options by which that viability, economic and/or political, could be achieved.[55] Two general points may be made about the literature.

First, that various conferences and studies on small states have failed to decide with any degree of precision what "smallness" means. There has been a tendency, as a result, to adopt arbitrary definitions of smallness.[56] One of the most recent studies on small states, for example, has adopted a population of one million or less as the essence of a small state.[57] It may be said that Malta would fit a definition of a small state both in terms of population and area size. In the period covered by this study the Maltese population ranged from about 100,000 persons in 1800 to about 250,000 in 1940.[58] In terms of area size the Maltese islands cover only an area of 120 square miles.

Second, most of the literature on small states deals with polities in a post colonial stage of development. In this sense many of the conclusions arrived at in these studies are not always supported by historical evidence. Lowenthal observes, for example, that the governments of small states are both large and interventionist. 'In general', he writes,

'a government's share of total enterprise varies inversely with state size. Any state requires an irreducible minimum of infrastructure, and the smaller the state the larger its government looms in its economy and society.'[59]

However, an IMF study published in 1983 seems to point to British colonialism rather than to size as the main cause for this.[60] It concludes that

'those countries that have been most influenced by the British Commonwealth system of government appear to employ larger numbers of government civil servants in administration than do other countries.'[61]

In the circumstances, there seems to be a general consensus that many of

the conclusions reached are speculative in nature rather than empirically based and that more research is needed.[62] This study by positing size as one of the factors that influenced the development of the Maltese public service seeks to make a contribution to the study of small states. This study, however, because it is spread over a substantially large period of history, has the added advantage of allowing for a better identification of those features related or associated with size, and it is, perhaps, better placed to test whether it is size or colonial heritage that is responsible for the large bureaucracies to be found in small states.

### PROPOSITION THREE

Proposition three is derived and remains concerned with the issues raised in the other two propositions. It assumes that these three main factors together determined, more than others, not only the way the Maltese public service developed but the kind of role it played. It argues that as a consequence of strategic interests, a weak and dependent economy and the pressures of geographic size, the Maltese public service had to perform a "dirigiste" or political management role. In a position of scarce resources and the restrictions imposed by smallness it was also responsible for reconciling British strategic needs with those of the population. Zammit has observed that 'military efficiency partly depends upon civilian cooperation',[63] but, in the absence of local popular institutions, it was the public service which provided the means by which this could be done.

The vast literature on colonial government also seems to make this assumption worth pursuing. Sir Anthony Bertram, a colonial civil servant, describes crown colonies as 'bureaucratically governed countries.'[64] Lennox Mills, in his study of Ceylon, notes that 'the Civil Government was carried on by members of the...civil service',[65] while Hall refers to senior civil servants as "ministers".[66] Sir Edward Blunt, once a leading member of the Indian Civil Service, lamenting the demise of crown colony government in that part of the empire wrote that



'many regretted that reduction of their official authority...the sacrifice of efficiency to political expediency...[and] that the position of the civilian of the future will differ considerably from that of his predecessor of twenty years ago. Where his predecessor took action, he must ask for orders; where his predecessor gave orders, he must advise. The civilian who used to serve by ruling must learn to rule by serving...He has ceased to be the kindly despot of former days; he has become the trusty servant.'[67]

In Africa the situation was quite similar for as Adu points out 'the Civil Service...was the effective government,' right up to independence.[68] Finally, the description of colonial officials by Fieldhouse as 'grand functionaries in the tradition of European bureaucracy under the ancien regime',[69] seems to drive the point home. The impression conveyed by these expressions is that colonial civil servants rather than being neutral or subordinate participants in the policy making process were actually the responsible party. It was they who governed.

In the case of the Maltese public service, however, proposition three argues that a combination of factors conspired to give civil servants a role that went beyond mere government. On its activity depended the economic and social welfare of the vast majority of the people. Zammit wrote that

'The ability of the government to provide direct and indirect employment became the determining factor in the living standard of the population as a whole.'[70]

In other words, the impression is that, apart from the responsibility for government, for much of the period under review in this study, public servants were also responsible for the management of the economy. Their role was, therefore, also managerial.

Thus, on the one hand, because they were the government, the role of public servants was political. On the other hand, it was managerial, not only because of the interests that the colonial government owned or controlled in Malta,[71] but because it was also the only economic force capable of dealing with the economic and social problems endemic to the colony.[72] It is because of this combination of political and managerial functions that it was decided to describe the role of the Maltese public

service as "dirigiste". This notion is not intended to convey the idea of a public service imbued with modern political roles or techniques of business management. Those are issues which have made themselves specially felt in the second part of this century. This study is concerned with a nineteenth, early twentieth century, public service. The concept is used as a tool by which the role of the Maltese public service and the direction of its development may be explained and as a label by which to categorise it in the process.

The three propositions outlined above describe clearly what is meant by relating the public service to its environment. The notion that public bodies are somehow involved in some kind of relationship with the wider environment, tends to underline most contemporary studies of administration. Greenwood and Wilson have argued, for example, that 'public bodies do not exist in a vacuum but are closely related to the broader environment which they inhabit.' [73] Ridley makes a similar point but stresses this relationship further.

'Administrative systems cannot be understood except by reference to their political environment...[and] the point here for the political scientist...is that political systems cannot be understood without study of the administration.' [74]

The idea, expressed by Smith and Stanyer, that the structure of a system is 'a pattern of interactions and relationships between separate elements', [75] seems to be more to the point. It not only points towards an interdependence between the various parts of the system through actions and structures, but the notion of a 'pattern' tends to suggest that this interdependence has a certain coherence which cannot be fully grasped if any one part of the system is studied in isolation from the rest of the system and the elements that constitute it. They further stress 'the importance of not drawing too rigid a distinction between society and government', [76] pointing to the case of Northern Ireland as one example of how variant forms of culture may influence the governmental system. They conclude that as a result of these cultural inputs into the system, public

service patterns of behaviour in Northern Ireland tend to be 'quite distinct from those found on the mainland even though political institutions were formally very similar.'[77]

Studies of developing societies provide further examples of the interrelationship between administration and the rest of the environment. Katz and Eisenstadt, for example, examined, by reference to developing societies, the Weberian notions of impersonality and universality of rules, both of which remain largely the attributes of developed and Western societies.[78] In the latter, they argue, the application of rules is not seen as dependent on individual discretion or partiality. Formal rules are impersonal and universal and any deviation in applying these rules can only be sanctioned by appeal tribunals or by the courts. In contrast, according to the authors, in a society which operates according to traditional norms, rules - and therefore all decisions reached on the basis of those rules - are assumed to be subject to influence through personal bargaining and negotiation. Thus, in such societies, formal rules constitute, in the view of individuals, merely a place to begin the bargaining.

In his discussion of the use of public service methods in underdeveloped countries, Riggs provides a further example, introducing the 'sala' model of administration as a tool by which to examine the public service of these countries.[79] The sala model of administration has the form of a Western bureaucracy but is actually filled with individuals operating according to more traditional norms of family and communal loyalty. Under such conditions, the structure of the administrative system may appear to be similar to that of the country which has imposed it, but the attitudes of those entrusted with its running and the conditions that they have to conduct the administration in, are so different, that in practice the two systems bear no comparison.

Each of the above examples serve to stress the view that, in a study of the administration, the wider environment to which the administration

has to relate must be given full consideration. They also stress that, where actual differences exist between different societies, in one or more elements of their political environment, one may reasonably expect to encounter crucial differences of one sort or another in their administration. Thus, identifying what constitutes the environment of the particular administration under examination becomes crucial to its understanding. This study seeks to follow in this pattern.

#### RESEARCH STRATEGIES

A study which is bound by historical perimeters of the sort that this is, i.e. 1800 to 1940, allows for only one type of research methodology. This is one based on historical records. The strength of this study lies in the richness of the primary source material upon which it is based. No less than 800 volumes of correspondence and documents, official and private, handwritten or printed, published and unpublished have been examined for this study. Because the Maltese public service has been so overwhelmingly neglected as a field of study, a great many of the documents utilised in this study were being made available for the first time. Some other material which has also been utilised, although available in a published form, has not before now received the attention it deserved. However, the vast proportion of the material can be described as official in character. Unfortunately, for reasons which are not altogether clear, there exists in Malta a scarcity of private papers.

Of the unpublished source material the most important and the richest source of primary material is that gathered under Colonial Office at the Public Records Office, near Kew Gardens, in London. Material relating to Malta is generally grouped in the Colonial Office records under items C.O.158 to C.O.163. Other material concerning Malta can be found under C.O.323, C.O.324, C.O.879 Africa, Volumes 2, 11 to 13, and 17, and C.O.883 Mediterranean Volumes 1 to 7.[80]

The papers gathered under C.O.158 which consist of no less than 543

volumes and cover the period 1801-1943, provide the basis for this study. They are officially classified as 'Original Correspondence' and within them can be found all the official letters, despatches and enclosures forwarded by Governors of Malta or local officials to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The Governors' despatches provide the official view of matters while many of the enclosures allow, in many cases, for the examination of the very same issues raised in the despatches from different view points. Such enclosures tended either to be formal reports commissioned or requested by the governor, or memorials and petitions submitted by individuals or groups for presentation to the Secretary of State. In an effort to ensure good government the Colonial Office took upon itself the role of arbiter, obliging governors to remit to its attention the views, grievances or demands from the colonies for which they were responsible. In later years photographs and reports from local newspapers were forwarded with despatches. It must also be understood by the reader that, certainly in the case of Malta and other crown colonies, almost every new appointment, promotion, public project or policy had to be submitted for the approval of the Secretary of State. Consequently, these documents are in themselves rich in information and fascinating in detail. However, their importance is greatly enriched by the generally detailed Colonial Office minutes that accompany them. These minutes, as the reader will have ample opportunity to discover in this study, will serve to demonstrate how the development of the Maltese public service was, or indeed, was not, influenced by this office in London. They will help to demonstrate the contribution made by various individual officials, ranging from Secretaries of State to Clerks. These minutes will also serve to show how changes in attitudes over the period of study were reflected in the different policy approaches adopted. Without some of these minutes this research would have lost a good deal of appeal. These minutes, as Hall has shown, acquired greater significance in the 1870s when junior clerks were allowed greater

responsibility and freedom to engage in discussion with their superiors.[81]

C.O.159, officially designated as "Entry Books", serve to complement the above volumes, containing letters and instructions from Secretaries of State for the Colonies to Governors in Malta. This section is made up of 32 volumes covering the period 1799 to 1872. Until the latter date, the actual replies or despatches from the Secretary of State to the Governor were recorded and filed under this heading, although some draft replies prepared by officials for the Secretary of State could also be found under C.O.158. However, after 1872 only the draft replies were preserved, the flimsies being gradually destroyed.[82] These draft replies however tended to reflect accurately the official despatches bearing also the final corrections made to them by Colonial Secretaries.

The documents listed under C.O.160, 161, 162, and 163 may be considered of secondary importance. They serve, by and large to provide supporting material for the issues raised in the above two volumes. C.O.160,(11 volumes) brings together all the Acts and Ordinances passed by the Government of Malta between 1839 and 1939. C.O.161 contains the minutes and proceedings of the Legislative and Executive Council of the colony. These papers, perhaps not so much of secondary importance as the former, provide interesting insights regarding the role of the public service as the government and of senior public servants as its "ministers". They also serve to throw more light on such general issues as the decision making process in the colony and on specific issues such as the introduction of competitive examinations for entry into the Maltese public service. Editions of the Malta Government Gazette, from 1818 to 1940, are to be found under C.O.162. These volumes, numbering 82 in all, carry every appointment to the Maltese civil service, every proclamation relating to entry into the service, reports or extracts from reports of local commissions appointed to investigate every kind of administrative act or to

promote reform, and an additional wealth of statistics. Finally, C.O.163 is merely a collection of what became generally known as the Blue Books. These Blue Books represent the annual details about civil and military offices in the colony, the names of their holders and their emoluments, and statistical information relating to income and expenditure, exports and imports, and population.

A second group of documents, which are not solely concerned with Malta, are those grouped under C.O.323 and 324, and under Colonial Office Confidential Print. The former, apart from containing the minutes of Colonial Office meetings, also contain the private correspondence conducted by Robert Hay with the Governor and with the Chief Secretary in Malta between 1826 and 1830. As Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, Hay had been in the habit of conducting this correspondence on behalf of the Secretary of State without the latter's knowledge. This practice, however, was not approved by Goderich, Bathurst's successor as Colonial secretary of State, and he was eventually ousted from his office. Instructions were given that the correspondence be transcribed and copies kept at the Colonial Office.[83] Because of their semi-official character, for instructions were also conveyed by Hay through these letters, one obtains a wider picture of the personalities of some of the actors involved and the dominant issues at the time.

Colonial Office Confidential Print consist of printed selected correspondence, memoranda and other documents copied for internal use within the Colonial Office, or in some cases, for circulation to the Cabinet. Their contents range from single page copies of reports and memoranda to large compilations of the more important correspondence on particular subjects which extend to several hundred pages. The latter were of considerable administrative value in providing a compact and convenient way of pinpointing main papers in the Colonial Office without the need to refer to the whole gamut of original correspondence.

An important admission has to be made at this point. There is no Public Records Office in Malta and the various records, documents and private papers, (the few that are known to exist), are scattered among several institutions and departments. None of the papers of the departments are indexed, bound or necessarily collated. It is indeed, a researchers nightmare, and all researchers have experienced serious difficulties when conducting research in Malta. To rectify this, during the past four years a working committee has been appointed with the task of establishing a Public Records Office in Malta.

Finally, where comparisons were deemed necessary, especially with events or developments in other colonies, these were mainly carried out with the aid of published secondary sources.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Peter Self, (1976), (2nd ed), Administrative Theories and Politics, Allen & Unwin, London, p.3
2. H. Smith, (1953), Britain in Malta, Vol.1, Constitutional Development in Malta in the Nineteenth Century, Progress Press, Valletta, p.ix.
3. Ibid., pp.ix-x.
4. Great Britain, Colonial Office, (1932), Malta Royal Commission 1931, Colonial Office No.68, London, HMSO, p.9
5. D. Austin, in H. Frendo, (1979), Party Politics in a Fortress Colony: The Maltese Experience, Midsea Books, Valletta, p.x.
6. Ibid., p.xii.
7. Several books and articles have been written about the role played by Malta in World War II, their contents ranging from studies of individuals, memoirs of servicemen and civilians, and war studies. Among the most recent are J. Micallef, (1981), When Malta Stood Alone, 1940-1943, Interprint, Malta, and E. Bradford, (1985), Siege: Malta 1940-1943, Hamish Hamilton, London. The conflict between Church and State, which has characterised twentieth century Maltese politics has also received attention. See, for example, the excellent study by A. Koster, (1981), Prelates and Politicians, Free University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, and J. F. Boissevain's, (1956), Saints and Fireworks: Religion and Politics in Rural Malta, Athlone Press, London.
8. See W. P. Gulia, (1974), Governmental Liability in Malta, Malta Univ. Press, Malta.
9. J. Austin and G. C. Lewis, Commissioners, to Lord Glenelg, Secretary



of State for the Colonies, 10 Mar. 1837, in Copies or Extracts of Reports of the Commissioners Appointed to inquire into the Affairs of the Island of Malta, and of Correspondence thereupon, Part 1, Parl. Papers, 16 Feb. 1838, p.9.

10. Ibid., pp.6-10; and Glenelg to Cardew (OAG), 12 Jan. 1836, C.O.159/14, PRO, Kew, London.

11. See Stuart to Stanley, 12 Sept. 1844, C.O.158/129; and Stuart to Stanley, 12 Nov. 1844, C.O.158/129, PRO, Kew, London.

12. Stuart to Stanley, 12 Sept. 1844, C.O.158/129, PRO, Kew, London.

13. A course leading to a degree in Public Administration was introduced by the Faculty of Management Studies at the University of Malta in 1978. After a change of Government in 1987 it was decided to phase out this course permanently, not because of lack of demand from potential applicants, but from mainly political motives. Eventually, a new department, the Department of Public Policy was established within the same faculty, to run courses in politics, public administration and labour studies.

14. Refer to bibliography at the back of this study.

15. For a history of Malta which describes the transition to French rule see F. W. Ryan, (1930), *The House of the Temple*, Burns and Oates, London.

16. Ibid.; A. Vella, (1978), *Storja ta' Malta*, Klabb Kotba Maltin, Valletta, also provides a general description of events at this time; see p.76.

17. The most detailed account of the events which led to the establishment of British rule in Malta can be found in J. Testa, *Bejn Zewg Nahat tas-Swar*, 3 Vols., Klabb Kotba Maltin, Valletta. See W. Hardman, (1901), *A History of Malta during the Period of French and British Occupations, 1798-1815*, London.

18. See, for example, A.Vella, (1978), *Storja...*, op.cit, Vol.11, p.10.

19. A. Vella, (1969), *The University of Malta, A Bicentenary Memorial*, National Press, Malta, p.2.

20. See Chapter Two.

21. Around the turn of the nineteenth century British attitudes to government discouraged state intervention in the economy. The politics of "laissez faire" conceived the role of the state solely as that of "night-watchman". See W. O. Henderson, (1967), *The Industrial Revolution on the Continent, 1800-1914*, Frank Cass, London, p.10; and C. Leys, (1983), *Politics in Britain*, Heinemann, London, p.231.

22. A. Vella, *Storja...*, p.107.

23. H.I. Lee, (1972), *Malta 1813-1914: A Study in Constitutional and Strategic Development*, Progress Press, Valletta, p.93.

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26. Ibid., especially Cremona.

27. "Integration or Self-determination", Electoral Manifesto of the Malta Labour Party, (1950), Union Press, Valletta.

28. E. Dobie, (1967), Malta's Road to Independence, Univ. of Oklahoma Press, Norman, pp.78-9.

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30. See bibliography at the back of this study.

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32. Il-Hsieb, (1980), Vol.III, Special Edition, Union Press, Valletta.

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34. A.H. Birch, (1968), (2nd ed), The British System of Government, Allen & Unwin, London, p.53.

35. D.R. Steel, in F.F. Ridley, (ed), (1979), Government & Administration in Western Europe, Martin Robertson, Oxford, p.18.

36. E. Barker, (1944), The Development of Public Services in Western Europe, 1660-1930, Oxford Univ. Press, London, pp.12-3.

37. W. Wilson quoted in Barker, op.cit. p.13.

38. H. Machin in Ridley, op.cit. p.67.

39. A. Vella, The University..., p.2.

40. F. W. Ryan, op.cit. p.103.

41. Ibid., pp.102-3.

42. See Chapter Eight.

43. See Chapter Nine.

44. D. Austin, (1971), Malta and End of Empire, Frank Cass, London, pp.3-6, and notes to Part One.

45. See E. Bradford, (1961), The Great Siege: Malta 1565, Penguin Books, Middx., Ch.I.

46. Ibid., Chs.IV and XXXI.
47. S. Laspina, (1971), *Outlines of Maltese History*, (12th ed), A.C. Aquilina & Co, Valletta, pp.116-20.
48. A. Koster, op.cit. p.36.
49. Frendo's very title, *Party Politics in a Fortress Island*, lays stress on this aspect of Maltese political life. Smith, op. cit. p.237, argues that strategic considerations dominated British attitudes in the post-Waterloo century and as a consequence Britain disregarded the interests of native leaders in Malta. Dobie, op.cit. p.vii, argues that the 'great obstacle in the way of a grant of independence was the position of Malta as an essential part of the British defense system.'
50. E.L. Zammit, (1984), *A Colonial Inheritance*, Univ. of Malta, Malta, p.10.
51. Ibid., p.10.
52. W.A. Charlton, (1961), 'The Development of the Maltese Economy', unpublished Thesis, Univ. of Durham, p.3.
53. Ibid., pp.71 & pp.75-6.
54. See P. Hein, *The Study of Micro-states*, p.16, and D.J. Murray, *Public Administration in the Microstates of the Pacific*, p.185, both in E. Dommen and P. Hein, (1985), (eds), *States, Microstates and Islands*, Croom Helm, London.
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56. Ibid., p.ix-x; and E. Dommen, in Dommen and Hein, op.cit., p.10.
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58. See Charles Price, (1954), *Malta and the Maltese. A Study in Nineteenth Century Migration*, Georgian House, Melbourne, pp.227-8.
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60. P. Sutton, 'Political Aspects', in Clarke and Payne, op.cit., pp.12-3.
61. Ibid., p.13.
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63. E.L. Zammit, op.cit., pp.10-1.
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66. H.L. Hall, (1937), *The Colonial Office: A History*, Longmans, Green &

Co, London, pp.124-5.

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68. A.L. Adu, (1965), *The Civil Service in the New African States*, Allen & Unwin, London, p.16.

69. D.K. Fieldhouse, (1982), (2nd ed), *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the 18th Century*, Macmillan, London, pp.246-7.

70. E.L. Zammit, *op.cit.*, p.11.

71. P.G. Julyan, (1880), *Report on the Civil Establishments of Malta*, Parl. Papers, C-2684, HMSO.

72. We shall see over several chapters that, in the absence of a financially strong middle class, the Maltese Government was very often called upon to shoulder responsibilities which in other colonies would have been left to private endeavour. We shall also have occasion to examine several failed attempts by the local government to divest itself from various responsibilities and to pass these to private individuals.

73. J. Greenwood and D. Wilson, (1984), *Public Administration in Britain*, Allen & Unwin, London, p.3

74. F.F. Ridley, *op.cit.*, p.4

75. B.C. Smith and J. Stanyer, (1976), *Administering Britain*, Martin Robertson, London, p.25.

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78. E. Katz and S.N. Eisenstadt, "Some sociological observations on the response of Israeli Organisations to new immigrants" in *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol.5, No.1, (June 1960) pp.113-33.

79. F.W. Riggs, (1964), *Administration in Developing Countries: The Theory of Prismatic Society*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

80. For a detailed description of these sources see R.B. Pugh, (1964), *The Records of the Colonial and Dominions Offices*, HMSO, London.

81. H.L. Hall, *op.cit.*, pp.22-3.

82. R.B. Pugh, *op.cit.*, p.35.

83. H.I. Lee, *op.cit.*, p.26.

## CHAPTER TWO

### BACKGROUND TO MALTA

The aim of this Chapter is to provide a background to Malta, its geography, its people, its economic and political institutions, and the developments which culminated in British rule. Two points should be noted, however. First, that the material presented below provides only a sketch which makes more succinct and concise published accounts. Second, since very little has been written about the Maltese public service before or during the time of the Order of St John, what follows below is an outline which suffices for the purposes of this study and which the author has synthesised from various sources.

#### GENERAL FEATURES

The history, politics, social life and economic activity of the Maltese Islands and their people, have been conditioned by four main considerations: geographical location, size, religion and foreign domination. Indeed, it is extremely difficult to talk of a Maltese history that is divorced from the overall history of the Mediterranean littoral or of the nations that dominated its politics down the centuries.

Lying almost equidistant between Gibraltar and Lebanon, and sixty miles south of Sicily and about one hundred and fifty miles north of Libya, (see Map 2:1), the Maltese Islands, consisting chiefly of Malta and Gozo, (see Map 2:2) have been aptly described by an Italian commentator as the 'crossroads of the Mediterranean' (la crocevia del Mediterraneo),[1] where the cultures of this inlet sea meet and where its trade routes cross. Others have expressed a similar opinion.

'...For over 3,000 years, all the forces and currents which make up Mediterranean history have at least impinged on Malta. Each has left something in the landscape and it is tempting to believe, in the traditional experience of the people.'[2].

At some stage or another every civilization or power that dominated the Mediterranean - European or Semetic - either had some association with

MAP 2:1

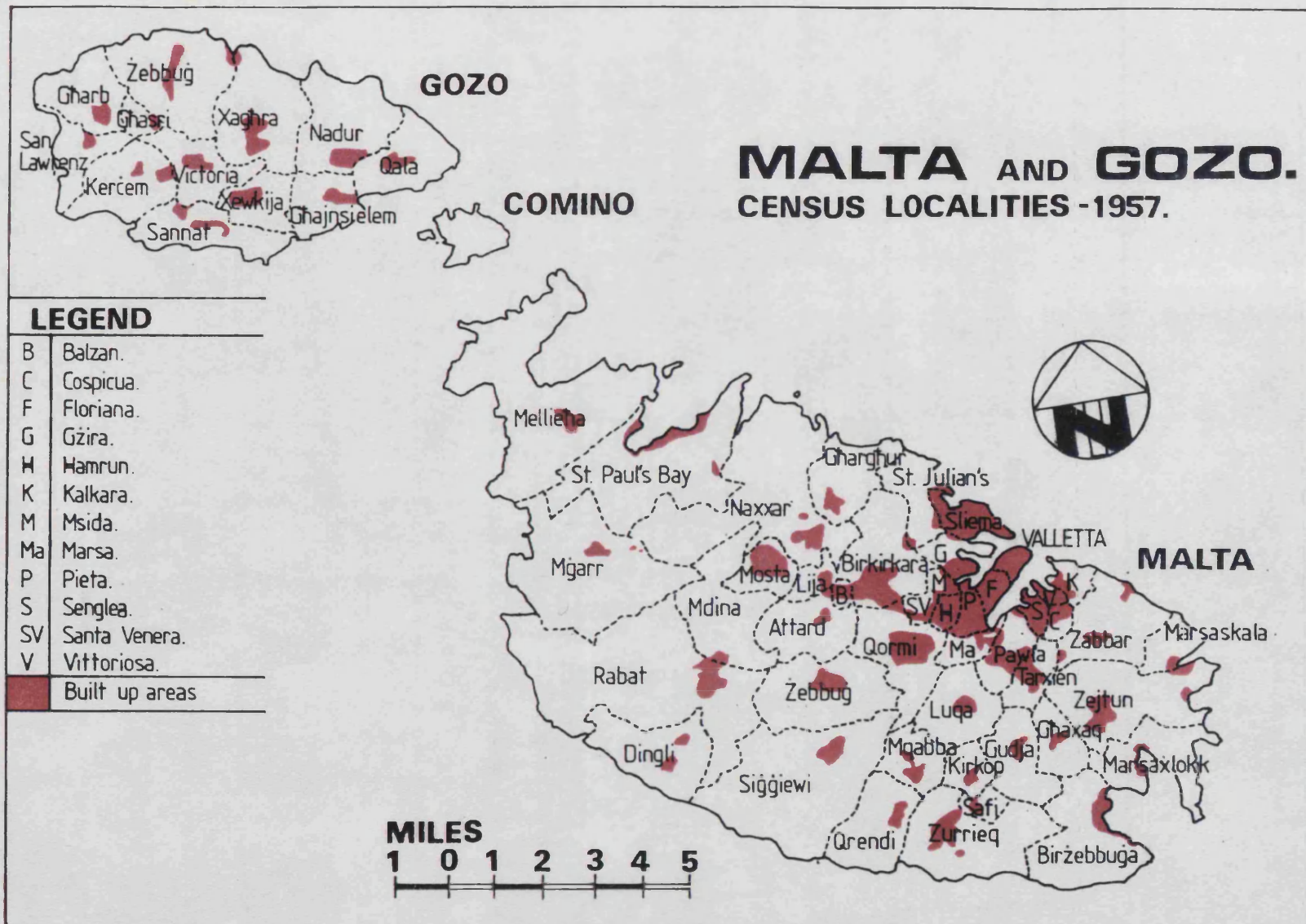




Malta or actually controlled the islands.[3] The name Malta, or Melita, as the islands were called in ancient times, is said by Biblical scholars to be Phoenician in origin meaning "refuge".[4] It appears that it is their location at the heart of the Mediterranean, coupled with the existence of magnificent harbours, that has brought these otherwise insignificant islands into prominence as early as the Phoenician period.

The Maltese islands are very small, their whole area being approximately one hundred and twenty square miles - very much the size of the Isle of Wight - but with a population, according to the last comprehensive census of 1985, of 345,705 persons.[5] The population of these islands has been on the increase since the seventeenth century. Until that time the population of Malta rose and fell according to the degree of stability that existed in the Mediterranean. The defences of the islands were wholly inadequate to protect the islanders and many would flee to neighbouring countries in time of crisis.[6] The network of fortifications built by the Order of St John rectified this matter somewhat and the population graph began to show an upward trend which has not yet been reversed.[7] However, it was in the latter half of the nineteenth century that the expansion in the population became really significant. From a population of around 100,000 persons in 1814, the population of the Maltese Islands had more than doubled by 1914, reaching the 220,000 mark. By independence in 1964, the population had increased by another fifty per cent, notwithstanding the fact that several thousands of Maltese had migrated since the end of World War One.[8] Thus, although much of the growth in population has been at its most rapid in this and the last century, it may be safely said that the Maltese Islands have always tended to be rather densely populated in relation to their size.

Malta has never possessed any mineral resources and much of its agriculture, with the exception of cotton, has been of the subsistence type.[9] A Commission sent to Malta by the Knights of St John in 1524, to



MAP 2:2



report on the suitability of the islands as their new headquarters, reported that Malta was little more than a rock inadequately covered with soil, its main products being cotton, honey and cumin, which were exchanged for corn. Water was scarce and droughts not uncommon.[10] The need to import large quantities of grain, until recently the staple food of the Maltese, has therefore, been one of the constant features of Maltese commerce.[11]

The Maltese people received their language from the South and their religion from the North. The former has its roots in Arabic, being nearest to the Arabic dialects of North Africa. However, the Maltese language has also been influenced by the island's long association with Southern Italy, drawing its syntax, idiom and a fair portion of its vocabulary from the Sicilian language.[12] Furthermore, for many centuries Italian was the language of administration, the courts and education, with the result that maltese did not acquire a settled alphabet until well into this century, and this notwithstanding the fact that Maltese was and remained the only language of the overwhelming majority of the people.[13]

From the North, the Maltese acquired their religion - the Roman Catholic faith. It became permanently established after the expulsion of the Arabs in the twelfth century by Count Roger I, the Norman.[14] Since that time, Malta has been ruled by European powers whose deference to the Church made it one of the most powerful institutions of the islands. Not surprisingly, therefore, Church-State relations tended to have a tremendous impact on the politics of the islands. At various points in Malta's history Rome too became inextricably involved in the island's politics.[15]

Until Malta was ceded to the Order of St John by Charles V of Spain in 1530 it enjoyed little importance in European or Mediterranean politics.[16] Throughout this time, the Maltese and their masters, noble families whose roots were to be found in Spain, Italy and Normandy, but who had settled in the islands, were outside the mainstream of European

politics of the time.[17] Their main connection was with Sicily and mainland Italy. From Sicily they obtained grain and fodder, while the cities and universities of the mainland provided culture and education.[18] This connexion with Sicily and Italy was also occasioned by the fact that Malta came under the jurisdiction of the Viceroy of Sicily.[19] For these reasons, Italian became the cultural and administrative language of the islands. Italian jurisprudence was adopted for legal purposes.[20] Although the Italian language acquired such a defined status in Malta its use remained restricted to the upper classes, perhaps an indication of the divisions that existed between them and the Maltese. This division may perhaps be best demonstrated by one particular example. Before the arrival of the Knights of St John, the capital of Malta was a fortified town, on a hill, at the heart of the island. To the European nobility, the town was referred to by the name of Citta Notabile, while to the Maltese the name of the town was, and remains to this day, Mdina. How truly foreign was the former name can be evidenced by the way it was completely swept out of usage by the upsurge of Maltese nationalism during and after World War Two. It was a case of the foreign giving way to the purely local name.[21]

#### THE ADMINISTRATION BEFORE 1530

John Austin and George C. Lewis, two Royal Commissioners sent out to investigate into the affairs of Malta in 1836, wrote that in Malta,

‘they have...a set of ancient complicated institutions founded upon a totally different set of legal and political principles from those of England.’[22]

Law and order was the principal concern of many of these institutions but there were others, such as the Università or grain monopoly, which were considered to be vital for the safety of the Island and the very survival of its people. Not much is known about these institutions and what is known is not beyond dispute. According to Vella, it appears that the government of the island of Malta, was in the hands of a Governor officially described as the ‘Capitano della Verga’. The Maltese called him

'Hakem' (in Arabic) or ruler. As representative of the Spanish monarchy he enjoyed both civil and judicial powers.[23] To carry out his duties he was assisted by several officials and a number of elected 'Giurati' [i.e. sworn-in administrators]. These officials together formed a council known as the Università or "Comune di Malta". The most senior official after the Hakem was the Chief Justice who was also the deputy Hakem. Then came the judges and the elected officials. Two officials, 'Il Portulano' and 'Il Massaro' were responsible for the collection of all customs dues while the Head of the 'Sekrezija' was charged with the duty of collecting those taxes or dues belonging to the sovereign. Another four or five officials were responsible for carrying out the remaining duties of the Università. The Università was a municipal body charged with the superintendency of the markets, weights and measures, the maintenance of roads and public edifices, the running of a school, quarantine, and the administration of the hospital of Santo Spirito at Mdina. However, its most important function was to furnish Malta with sufficient grain and other essential foodstuffs which the Islands lacked. The Kastellan, or keeper of the castle at Birgu and the 'Capitano dell Porto' were responsible for the security of the harbours.

The 'Consiglio Popolare', an elected body said to representing the nobility, the clergy, the professional bodies, the merchants, the guilds and the heads of families from every town or village, was responsible for electing the 'Giurati' and for ensuring good government on the part of the administration.[24] Its membership was increased during periods of crisis or danger.[25] Whether the Consiglio Popolare had deliberative or legislative powers remains unclear. In the nineteenth century Maltese leaders, in their bid to secure self-government, were to claim that this assembly did enjoy such powers. The British authorities on their part were to strenuously deny such claims.[26] Certainly, as was the case with other similar assemblies at the time, the Consiglio Popolare was an assembly that

was convened from time to time 'to give solemnity to certain events' and to elect municipal officials to administer the commune of Malta. It did not, as was also the case with other medieval assemblies, enjoy deliberative powers.[27] However, there could have been moments in its history when grave internal crisis or threats of foreign invasion, or during times when wars of succession left the throne to which the Maltese owed allegiance vacant, that the Consiglio Popolare temporarily acquired such powers.[28]

The population of the Maltese islands was mainly agrarian clustering around Mdina. Activity around the harbours was minimal and as yet there was little settlement around the coast lines and Malta's magnificent harbours.[29] The most powerful men in the island, such as the bishops, had their palaces in Mdina and all national activities were attended by them and presided over by the Governor and the Giurati.[30] The fortifications around Mdina served to protect the inhabitants in time of danger, especially from the frequent ravages of pirates and corsairs. In the sister island of Gozo, the pattern was similar, with the hilltop citadel at Rabat serving as the capital of that island.[31]

#### THE ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE KNIGHTS OF ST JOHN

In 1523 Charles V of Spain, against the wishes of the Maltese, ceded Malta to the Order of the Knights of St John, a military and religious order. The Knights were in desperate need of a new headquarters after having been expelled from their former stronghold of Rhodes, by the forces of the emergent Ottoman Empire. Without a new base from which the Order could continue to offer some form of resistance to Ottoman expansion in the Mediterranean, its very existence would no longer prove justified. Malta was thus ceded to provide the Order with its new headquarters and sovereign state.[32]

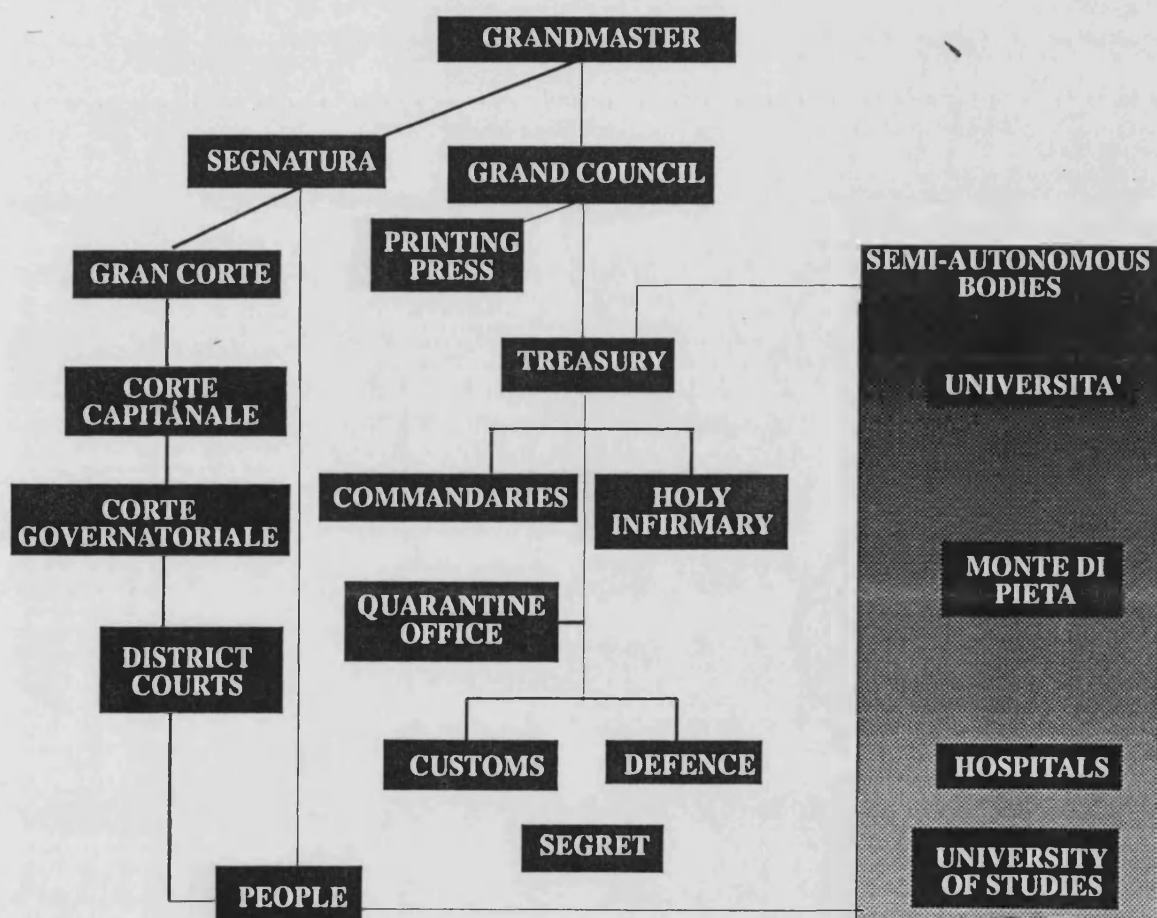
Price has observed that the government of the Order in Malta was deeply influenced by Spanish and French ideals of absolutism and as a consequence it came to embrace whole sectors of political and social

life.[33] Autocracy was the dominant form of government to be found throughout Europe at the time, while the religious character of the Order may partly explain its readiness to extend the paternalistic structures it found in Malta.[34] However, as a consequence of the Order's unending feud with muslim princes, within the administrative system adopted in Malta by the Knights, autocracy and paternalism overlapped significantly with the requirements of military security. Indeed, the Knights of St John never once lost sight of the fact that Malta was a fortress-state.

From the time of their arrival in Malta in 1530 until their expulsion from the Islands by Napoleon in 1798, the administration of the Order was directed towards securing the island from external attack; maintaining internal stability and security; the carrying out of its charitable obligations and of its military mission; and the efficient administration of its vast European estates. None of these activities were, however, independent of the others. Thus, for example, the revenue earned by the Order from its European estates helped to financially sustain each of the other activities.[35] In a similar way its military mission, albeit carried out on behalf of Christendom, not only prevented rapacious European monarchs from expropriating the Order's estates within their territories, but forced them, from time to time, to add to them.[36]

Soon after their arrival in Malta the Knights moved quickly to strengthen the defences of the islands and to extend their authority over the whole archipelago. Old fortifications were strengthened and new ones built. Much of this work was carried out in the Grand Harbour area where the fleet of the Order was anchored and where the Order settled its administrative offices. By the time of the Turkish Great Siege in 1565, several forts had been constructed in this vicinity.[37] The ending of the siege was followed by the building of the fortress-city of Valletta which further helped to strengthen the defence of the two adjacent harbours and the pressure of population which had built across the water within and

**The Administration of Malta under The Order of St John  
(1530-1798)**



**DIAGRAM 2:1**

around the fortress towns of Birgu, Burmula and Isla, commonly known as the Three Cities or Cottonera. The lithograph reproduced overleaf shows the fortifications and fortress towns constructed by the Order around the two main harbours from the time of their arrival until their expulsion from Malta in 1798. Several other forts and defences were constructed throughout the rest of Malta and Gozo.[38] When to all this activity are added the upkeep of the Order's navy, regiments, and arsenals it would soon become clear that defence expenditure proved to be considerable.[39]

Administratively, it was politically inconceivable for the Order to allow a rival administration to exist side by side with its own. The Knights, therefore, quickly suppressed the 'Consiglio Popolare' but retained with modified functions the Università, its administrative Council. Those local institutions which were allowed to continue to exist were brought, in some way or another, within the administrative machinery of the government of the Order by the time the French captured the islands.[40]

Under the government of the Order, all power and authority were vested in the Grandmaster. (See Diagram 2:1)

'He has no minister, but manages everything himself, and has immediate information of the most minute occurrences...and, as Grandmaster of Malta, he is more absolute, and possesses more power than most sovereign princes...he has the disposal of all the lucrative offices, he makes of his councils what he pleases;...in all councils that compose the jurisdiction of this little nation he himself presides...'[41]

The most important of these Councils was the Grandmaster's 'Grand Council' which was composed solely of members of the Order but which enjoyed only consultative powers. In time of crisis, however, the Council met for long sessions since Grandmasters generally realised that a serious crisis could result in the dissolution of their very Order.[42] But during periods of tranquility the administration was conducted on the instructions and at the discretion of the Grandmaster. A Second Council was the Segnatura which existed in order to ensure that the interests of the people were not completely overlooked or abused by members of the administration





**VALLETTA, THE THREE CITIES  
& THE HARBOURS.**



or individual knights, the courts having no jurisdiction over them. Presided over by the Grandmaster the Segnatura thus constituted the ultimate appeal court from the proceedings of the judicial courts and the administration. The Grandmaster could, if he so wished, overturn every judicial and administrative decision and without being required to give any explanation or reason for doing so. The segnatura was also the means through which petitions of every sort could be brought to the personal attention of the Grandmaster. These appeals and petitions were normally presented during an 'Udienza', as its weekly meetings were called. At these hearings, the Grandmaster was assisted by four 'Uditori', normally members of the legal profession. These Uditori were generally Maltese lawyers who owed their appointment to the Grandmaster of the time.[43]

The Knights imposed their own judicial system on the Maltese. The court presided over by the Hakem or 'Capitano della Verga' at Mdina, once the highest court in the islands, was now relegated to hearing petty cases in the rural areas and became styled the 'Corte Governatoriale', with the Hakem as Chief Magistrate and Governor of Mdina.[44] The most important court in Malta was at this time 'Il Tribunale della Gran Corte', the superior court charged with hearing all important civil, criminal and political cases and which was composed of a President and four other judges.[45] Another court, a lower court, 'Il Corte Capitaniale', was empowered to hear less serious cases including those relating to law and order.[46] Both of the latter tribunals were to be found in Valletta. Finally, there was the 'luogotenenti' or district courts, one of which was to be found in every town and village. Presided by a magistrate they were empowered to hear cases involving insignificant amounts. One cannot be sure whether these latter courts were truly needed considering the size of Malta, and one cannot help suspecting that their existence was influenced by considerations of patronage.[47]

The Grandmaster exercised ultimate authority over the courts through

the dual powers which he possessed of appointing and removing judges and through the Segnatura. All the judges of the courts were appointed by him from one year to the next and they were confirmed or removed from office at the annual "scrutiny" held at the palace. The Head of Government was not obliged to give any reason for the transfer or removal of a judge. It appears, however, that judges were seldom removed but regularly transferred from one court to another.[48] In all cases, court judges were paid by fixed fees while district magistrates received, annually, £10 in fees and £20 salary from the government.[49]

Even before setting foot in Malta the Order had expressed its preoccupation with the fact that Maltese agriculture provided only one-fourth or one-third of the grain consumed by the population the rest needing to be imported.[50] A fortress-state needed to be not just self-sufficient but capable of providing surpluses which would be readily available in the event of a siege. Furthermore, excessive dependence on foreign sources of grain may, in time of international scarcity and therefore, high prices, result in severe hardship among the population and may lead to serious political instability. They, therefore, took the Università', which enjoyed a monopoly over the bulk procurement, storing and distribution of grain and other essential foodstuffs, under their strict control transforming it into a veritable "massa frumentaria".[51] As a result of these activities grain continued to be available to the people at low and consistently stable prices. Some have argued that for almost the whole of this period grain could always be bought by the people at cheaper prices than those obtaining in surrounding countries, even during times of great scarcity.[52] A second function of the Università' was to tap what capital existed in the island carrying out its operations on monies invested with it by locals and by raising loans for defence and public works. The Università' began, in this sense, to serve as a form of public bank receiving private capital to finance its operations and paying

interest.[53] For both of these reasons the activities of the Università became of crucial importance for on them depended the social and economic prosperity of the people. By the time the Knights were expelled from Malta in 1798, this massa frumentaria held deposits to the value of about £300,000, out of which about £100,000 came from private individuals.[54]

Although those responsible for the daily operations of the Università continued to be Maltese officials who retained the title of Giurati or Jurats, (as the British came to call them), these officials were, however, no longer elected administrators but appointees of the Grandmaster. Furthermore, they had to carry out their duties under the supervision of two leading members of the Order, similarly appointed.[55] Indeed, reasons of internal security dictated that full control over this monopoly should be concentrated in the hands of members of the government. Two main reasons for this can be cited. First, were the Maltese to rise in revolt the Order held within its own hands the very means by which to crush the revolt. It not only controlled all the grain supplies but had the naval muscle to stop aid reaching the people. It was highly unlikely that any European state would come to the aid of the Maltese and in time they would be forced either to give up or face starvation. As we shall see this aspect was perfectly understood by the British in the first decade of the nineteenth century.[56] Second, that as long as the bulk of the labouring population was reasonably well fed, food being both cheap and abundant, they would remain immune to anti-government agitation provoked by the displaced local nobility. This aspect too was not lost on Britain.[57] Although the Order virtually took over the activities of the Università, suppressing some and adding new ones, the institution never assumed the role of a full government establishment such as the customs or Holy Infirmary but retained a semi-autonomous identity. Its finance, for example, although supervised by the Treasury remained separate and formed no part of the Tesoro Comune (Public Treasury).[58]

Public health and welfare were also leading preoccupations of the Order. The Order of St John was a charitable Order of hospitallers in addition to a military order. In the Holy Land and at Rhodes, where they had their headquarters before they were expelled by the Turks in 1520, the knights established and administered hospitals for needy pilgrims.[59] Soon after their arrival in Malta, the Order established its hospital, the Holy Infirmary, at Birgu. After the building of Valletta the hospital was moved to a new and much larger purpose-built infirmary.[60] The Order also supported other hospitals, such as that of Santo Spirito in Mdina and that of Santa Maria della Scala, when their finances and their incomes became insufficient to maintain them.[61] Furthermore, those who were needy or destitute could always depend on alms provided by the government to sustain them.[62] In later years this extensive system of paternalism led one British Governor to complain that

'the habits of dependency on the government for everything, engendered by the system established by the Knights of St John, has had a most pre-judicial effect on the industry and self-reliance of the people.'[63]

The Holy Infirmary was administered by the Grand Hospitaller, an extremely high-ranking knight. As it was the case with every other member of the Order, he received neither fees nor salary. Only the physicians and the hospital staff received remuneration for their services, and were all strictly forbidden from accepting or requesting payments from their patients.[64] It must be remembered that those who were admitted into hospitals at the time were either workers engaged by the Order or the urban poor who could not afford private care in their homes. But from various reports it seems that many who were destitute, rather than sick, found support within this institution.[65] As a consequence the Order spent about £10,000 of its annual budget on charities in the Holy Infirmary.[66]

Public health was also the concern of the Quarantine establishment. A small establishment, the responsibility of the Università of Mdina, had been in existence before the arrival of the Order in Malta.[67] The

government of the Order evolved the system further, however, building a lazaretto to accommodate passengers and goods arriving in the island.[68] This building, situated on what is commonly known as Manoel island, in Marsamcetto Harbour, served also as an isolation hospital in times of plague or other epidemics (See Map 2:1).[69] It appears that the quarantine regulations were strictly observed, with armed guards posted on land and sea.[70] Experience had taught the government of the Order that in small enclosed towns of the type found in Malta, it was difficult, once an epidemic had taken hold, to control it or eradicate it. Each town was a fortress in which the country population sought refuge in time of war and hence public health was of fundamental concern.[71]

In the eighteen century the Order established a pawnbrokerage, the Monte di Pieta, with a view to helping those who for some reason or other needed funds urgently but did not wish to part permanently with their valuables or could not pay the exorbitant, if illegal, interest rates charged by private individuals. A fixed interest was paid on loans and all classes of people resorted to its services over the years.[72] Like the Università' the funds of the Monte di Pieta were kept separate from the finances of the government and as in the case of other institutions, it was administered by officers appointed by the Order.[73]

The second half of the eighteen century saw the creation of the University by Grandmaster Pinto. In truth, this measure does not appear to have resulted from the desire of the Grandmaster to further the education of the people, but rather from a desire to take over the funds with which the college of the Jesuits had been endowed.[74] This college conferred degrees in theology and related subjects.[75] Following the example set by other European rulers Pinto expelled the Jesuit Order from Malta and in order to escape the censure of the Pope, he created the University with some of the funds sequestrated from the Jesuits.[76] Full authority in all matters, including the teaching curriculum was vested in the Chancellor or

Protector who was a senior member of the Order, a Knight Grand Cross.[77] The University had three faculties, that of Theology, Law and Medicine.[78] Graduates of the faculty of medicine filled, in later years, many of the positions in the hospitals.[79]

The Treasury of the Order was responsible for supervising the finances of every establishment even of those of a semi-autonomous character. But the Order sustained its military and administrative commitments in Malta in three ways. First, the Order minted its own currency and from time to time levied taxes.[80] Second, the Order derived the best part of its revenues from its estates - farmlands, castles and town dues - scattered throughout Europe.[81] Its estates in Europe were organized in 'commanderies' but their heads and their administration were appointed and supervised from Malta.[82] The revenues from the estates came into the island in different monetary form and the Order's Treasury exercised the function of a general bank whose relations extended from one end of Europe to the other.[83] According to Price, the Order spent about £180,000 annually from these revenues on schemes in Malta.[84]

Finally, there was the contribution made by Malta to the finances of the government. This came, principally, from privateering, customs, local taxes and income derived from property. The government received a percentage from the proceeds accruing from the activities of licensed Maltese privateers.[85] Custom duties provided another source of revenue and a Customs establishment existed for the purpose. An important source of local revenue, perhaps at the time the most important, was derived from the extensive property which the Order came to possess in Malta. Apart from substantial rural and urban properties, the Order owned all the windmills, granaries, and saltworks to be found in the islands.[86] How important this revenue was, can be seen from the fact that this property was administered by a magistrate, called Segret, 'who had the power to hold a court of justice to examine all cases relative to his administration.'[87]

It seems to be the case that public expenditure in Malta was relatively high, given the necessity of maintaining extensive defences, a strong navy and numerous institutions. By contrast the cost of the public service itself, in terms of emoluments, appears to have been relatively low.[88] Three reasons may be offered. First, a number of charitable institutions, such as the Ospizio, relied on private donations and bequests for their funding receiving little or no assistance from the Treasury.[89] Second, all heads of institutions were members of the Order and therefore received no salary for their services. No doubt many delegated their duties to subordinates for no other reason than the fact that in the tradition of the European nobility, most Grand Crosses were illiterate. Members of the conventual congregation of the Order, its purely religious (and literate) wing also performed many duties connected with the administration.[90] Third, all others employed within the administration, with the exception of employees of the health department, who apparently were paid fixed salaries, received either fixed fees or a fixed percentage of the revenue collected,[91] a practice very much in line with the system to be found in other continental bureaucracies.[92]

By the time Malta became part of the British Empire many of these institutions had a history that stretched over centuries. It was within this administrative structure that the machinery which coordinated Maltese social, economic and political management was to be found as late as the end of the eighteenth century. It was also to determine their future course for most of the nineteenth century.

#### SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE RULE OF THE ORDER IN MALTA

The Order of St John remained in Malta for two-and-half centuries and their administration had several consequences for Malta, some of which are relevant to this study. Some of these were economic in character. Although the vast majority of the people were to remain employed in agriculture, under the government of the Order there was a consistent and gradual

increase of other occupations. Public works, involving the building and repair of fortifications, and of various buildings and palaces throughout the islands provided the Maltese population with constant employment.[93] The building of the fortress-city of Valletta provided work not only for thousands of Maltese, but enabled various Maltese architects to gain prominence.[94] Vella observed that

'it is remarkable that so small an island...and that a race so small, under constant foreign domination, should have been able to use its native architects almost without exception...[for] except for Bonamici and Stefano Ittar, no foreign architect erected important buildings in Malta during the period of the Knights.'[95]

Other Maltese served in the islands' garrison or navy.[96] The Order was at one time a powerful naval force in the Mediterranean, attacking moslem shipping, raiding their coasts and participating in various joint expeditions with other European powers.[97] Some of those who were not employed on the galleys or in the armed forces, found employment in the dockyard and the arsenals.[98]

Under the Order, however, agriculture remained the dominant occupation of the Maltese. According to a contemporary visitor to the island,

'the industry of the Maltese in cultivating their little island is inconceivable. There is not an inch of ground lost in any part of it; and where there was not soil enough, they have brought over ships and boats loaded with it from Sicily.'[99]

The cultivation and manufacture of cotton for export became widespread. The same visitor had noted that

'the Maltese manufacture their cotton into a great variety of stuffs. Their stockings are exceedingly fine...their coverlids and their blankets are esteemed all over Europe.'[100]

Thousands of Maltese, either as farm labourers or spinners and weavers enjoyed a decent standard of living through this economic activity, the export of manufactured cotton realising between £400,000 and £500,000 every year.[101]

A third factor which had important economic consequences for Malta arose from the source of the Order's finances. It has already been observed in Chapter One that the bulk of the foreign revenue earned was expended in



Malta where the Order maintained a complex administration which affected all classes of Maltese society. As a result, the island and its population became predominantly dependent, for their social and economic welfare, on income derived from abroad.[102]

There were social consequences too. The Order of St John, on its arrival in Malta, rather than establishing its headquarters at Mdina, the land-locked capital of the island, organized itself around the Grand Harbour where its fleet was stationed.[103] This, as was seen earlier, influenced new demographic patterns which resulted in the establishment of the Three Cities, (Cospicua, Senglea and Vittoriosa) and Valletta.[104] The fortress-city of Valletta became the capital and centre of power, all departments of government having their seat there.[105] These developments created an urban Malta around Valletta and a rural Malta around Mdina, the latter, however, enjoying no political status. The island of Gozo formed, and indeed still does, part of rural Malta. This division was also reflected in social differences. The urban population, still small at this time, was made up of professional people, those involved in commerce, household servants and labourers of every sort and members of the garrison. Valletta was a cosmopolitan city with cultural and social activities, and as such, its residents were more or less secularly minded.[106] Rural Malta, by contrast, had a population that spent most of its day at work and church, entertainments being few and far between, and mostly centering on the village church. Their contact with the people of the towns was irregular and generally occurred during national festivities or special occasions and on market days.[107] Under the Government of the Knights of St John,

'began a state of affairs which continues to the present day in which Malta is inhabited by divided societies, farmers and town dwellers, a garrison and the indigenes, where parochial affairs are faced by cosmopolitan ideas.'[108]

But there were other divisions too. The knights of the Order, from their arrival in the island, kept themselves apart from the Maltese. The

latter were, in the eyes of the knights, 'vassalli e sudditi di questo Dominio', [vassals and subjects of this dominion], and consequently barred from government or membership of the Order.[109] Those appointed to offices depended on the patronage of powerful members of the Order and not least the Grandmaster himself. The Knights were not adverse to rewarding those who served them well with honours and monetary rewards. For example, titles of nobility were bestowed, from time to time, by the Order on some of those Maltese who had served them loyally, even though the Order did not fully recognize the claims of the local nobility to its past status.[110] Others were compensated by the Order in other ways. For example, a number of beds at the general hospital, usually not more than fifty, were reserved for sailors and soldiers invalidated out of the navy and army, for shipyard workers and others who needed support.[111]

Another consequence which arose from the rule of the Order was military and strategic. As I have already indicated in Chapter One the arrival of the Order embroiled the Maltese islands in the struggles of East against West.[112] In 1565, the Turks attempted to conquer the islands, in a bid to deliver a final blow to the Order and to secure control of the eastern half of the Mediterranean. The success of the Order and the Maltese in the face of such overwhelming odds in protecting the island from Turkish rule, helped to stall Ottoman expansion.[113] It was from this period onwards that Malta's reputation as a fortress island began to emerge and several European christian powers sought to strengthen the defence of the islands by supporting the building of the fortress-city of Valletta and the repair of the other fortifications. In their eyes Malta became a defensive outpost of Europe against Ottoman designs.[114]

#### PRELUDE TO BRITISH RULE

The French Revolution changed this position of the Order in Malta and Europe dramatically. It was also soon to accentuate the strategic importance of Malta. Within a short time after the French revolution the

Order's estates in France were confiscated and as the French armies advanced in Europe, the Order lost its remaining possessions.[115] The majority of the Maltese, who had put up with the government of the Order because of its paternalism, became increasingly disenchanted with it now that the revolution had impoverished it and could no longer benefit them. The Massa Frumentaria too was in difficulties, having a deficit amounting to about £100,000.[116] Conspiracies against the Order became common place. The local elite did not wish to overthrow or replace the Order with a new power. They preferred to gain a share in the government of their island, a measure which the Order was not prepared to countenance.[117] But the Order had too many enemies within its own ranks. Many French knights were in secret communication with the Directory in Paris, passing to them important information regarding the defences and fortifications of the island.[118] Napoleon saw Malta as the key to the Mediterranean and the stepping-stone to Egypt and British India and was, therefore, determined to acquire the islands.[119] In 1798, the French fleet enroute to capture Egypt appeared off Valletta with Napoleon on board. The Order, assailed from within and from outside, surrendered the islands without a struggle.[120] Napoleon lost no time in expelling the knights from Malta.

But French possession of Malta was to be short-lived. In his short stay in Malta Napoleon had set about dismantling Malta's system of paternal administration, suppressing or taking over, for the exclusive use of the French troops, several public institutions. Maltese attachment to the old established system of administration was completely ignored. In September 1878, three months after the French had taken Malta, disenchanted with French rule the Maltese rose in revolt.[121] A Maltese provisional government was established at Mdina, for within 48 hours most of the countryside had fallen under Maltese control. The French, however, continued to hold Valletta and the Three Cities. Naples provided the initial support for the rebels but within a short period of time British

warships had arrived to blockade the French by sea. The stalemate continued for another two years before the French finally surrendered to the British in September 1800.[122]

The Maltese revolt against the French left the islands exhausted, socially and economically. Thousands of Maltese had lost their lives, some as a direct consequence of the fighting, but mainly through malnutrition or disease. The cultivation and manufacture of cotton was seriously disrupted with the consequence that its traditional Spanish markets were lost.[123] The predicament in which the Maltese found themselves was made worse by the fact that their paternalistic institutions, upon which their survival depended in times of such severe crisis, had been disrupted and plundered of their funds by the French. For the Maltese the dawn of the nineteenth century certainly looked bleak and for a time, as we shall see in the following Chapter, economic uncertainty was compounded by political uncertainty over the future of the islands. But the Maltese, as will also be demonstrated, enjoyed one advantage. Nearly all the Great Powers desired possession of their strategic Islands and this, for a time at least, proved to be a very important bargaining asset for them.

#### NOTES and REFERENCES

1. Giorgio Mattei, 'Malta, La Crocevia del Mediterraneo', RAI, Roma, 14 Apr. 1981. See also Harrison Smith, (1953), Britain in Malta, Progress Press, Valletta, Vol.II, p.ix.
2. H. Bowen-Jones, J.C. Dewdney, and W.B. Fisher, (1961), Malta: Background for Development, Univ. of Durham, p.108.
3. Ibid., p.108.
4. F.F. Bruce, (1982), Acts, Scripture Union, London, p.117.
5. Demographic Review of the Maltese Islands, (1985), Central Office of Statistics, Valletta, p.2.
6. A. Vella, (1974), records at least two instances of population decline in Malta in his two volume history of Malta. In Vol.I he writes that in 1457 the population had fallen to such an extent that it lacked the manpower to defend itself from frequent piratical attacks by corsairs from the Barbary States. Storja ta' Malta, Vol.I, Klabb Kotba Maltin, Valletta, p.154. In Vol.II he observes that following the Great Siege of 1565 by the Turks, a large number of Maltese crossed over to Sicily. They feared that having failed in their first bid to capture the island the Turks would now

launch an even bigger attack. Following the siege the defences of the island were not in a condition to withstand another attack. The Order was forced to apply to the Viceroy of Sicily to force Maltese migrants to return to Malta and help in the reconstruction of the fortifications and the island's defence. Ibid., Vol.II, (1979), p.7.

7. For a detailed study of Maltese population trends, see J. Richardson, Ch.VI, in Bowen-Jones et al.; see also C. Price, (1954), *Malta and the Maltese: A study in Nineteenth Century Migration*, Melbourne.

8. W.A. Charlton, 'Trends in the Economic Geography of Malta since 1800', unpublished PhD thesis, Durham University, 1961. On page 97 he notes that 'as many Maltese left the islands during the decade 1911-21, as had left during the whole period 1842-1891'.

9. See Price, op.cit., p.2. With regard to the cotton industry he says: 'In this industry a large part of the community shared, from the farmer who "abandoned almost every species of culture" for it, to the numerous persons in every town and village engaged in its spinning and weaving.' See also Brydone, p.44.

10. Bowen-Jones, et al., p.108.

11. Ibid., p.110.

12. J. Aquilina, (1961), *Papers in Maltese Linguistics*, Univ. of Malta, Valletta, p.180.

13. See Introductory Note in J. Boissevain, (1965), *Saints and Fireworks: Rural Politics in Malta*, Athlone Press, Univ. of London, London.

14. J. Laspina, (1946), *Outline of Maltese History*, Progress Press, Valletta, p.249.

15. See A. Koster, (1981), *Prelates and Politicians: Changing Power-balances between Church and State in a Mediterranean Island Fortress, (1530-1976)*, PhD thesis, Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam, Holland, pp.20-25.

16. Laspina, op.cit., pp.249-50; Bowen-Jones, op.cit., p.107; Harrison Smith, op.cit., Vol.I, p.xiv.

17. Ibid., p.107; and D. Austin, op.cit., p.5.

18. The Maltese islands connection with Sicily was of long standing. The Normans had certainly attached Malta to this kingdom and this policy was continued by the Aragonese who placed Malta under the control of the Viceroy of Sicily. See Vella, Storja..., op.cit., Vol.I, pp.126-8.

19. Bowen-Jones, op.cit., p.107.

20. See Note 21.

21. Bowen-Jones, op.cit., p.111. Mdina is said to be a derivative of the Arab name Medina. The city was certainly given its name by the Arabs. The Maltese continued to call the town Mdina. After the building of Valletta the 'Italianate' upper classes began to refer to Mdina as 'Citta Vecchia' (the Old City), but its original name persisted among the Maltese. Furthermore, towns in Malta have always had two names, one local the other foreign. Valletta is commonly referred to by all Maltese as Il-Belt, 'the

city', while Vittoriosa, Senglea and Cospicua, i.e. the Three Cities, are referred to as Il-Birgu, L-Isla, and Burmola, respectively. Villages, by contrast have always had one name, that given to them by the Maltese. This provides yet another demonstration of the divisions that existed between those in the country districts and those in the towns, the latter in the grip of foreign control and influence.

22. J. Austin and G.C. Lewis, Commissioners, to Glenelg, Secretary of State for the Colonies, in 'Report Relative to the Employment of Maltese in Executive Offices', 19 Feb. 1838, C.O.158/115, PRO, Kew, London.

23. Vella, Vol.I, op.cit., pp.138-9.

24. Report of the Commissioners of 1812, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London. Laspina, p.252. According to Laspina the Consiglio Popolare had these functions. 1. To elect the Guirati, that composed the Università and other officials of the Government. 2. To submit to the King all the needs of the people. 3. To report the abuses of the King's Representatives. 4. To provide the Island with enough corn and foodstuffs. 5. With the authority of the King, to make taxes and loans if necessary.

25. Vella, Vol.I., op.cit., pp.138-9.

26. Report of the Commissioners of 1812, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London.

27. Laspina, as we have seen in note 25 did not ascribe any deliberative or legislative powers to the Consiglio Popolare. Others, however, did. Eton, for example, in his 'Authentic Materials for a History of the People of Malta', claimed that the Consiglio had such powers. The argument, however, was to be central to the conflict between Malta and Britain for almost eighty years of the nineteenth century. Antonio Marongiu, *Medieval Parliaments*, p.47, in A.H. Birch, (1971), *Representation*, Macmillan, London, p.25.

28. D. Austin, op.cit., pp.4-5; H. Smith, op.cit., Vol.I, p.xiv.

29. A.P. Vella, (1971), *Storja ta' Malta*, Klabb Kotba Maltin, Valletta, Vol.II, p.264; also Bowen-Jones, et al., op.cit., p.107.

30. E.C. Vassallo, (1915), 'The Constitution of Malta', in A. Macmillan (edit), *Malta and Gibraltar, Historical and Descriptive, Commercial and Industrial Facts, Figures, and Resources*, W.H. & L. Collingridge, London, p.250.

31. Of the two large islands that form the archipelago, the island of Gozo although substantially smaller than Malta has always dominated in terms of agricultural produce. The smallness of the island has meant that Rabat, its capital, has always dominated the social and political life of the people. The notion that in Gozo all roads lead to Rabat would a few years ago have had literal meaning for could not travel from one village to another without having practically to go through Rabat which is situated in the very centre of Gozo.

32. Vella, Vol.I., op.cit., pp.182-6

33. C. Price, (1954), *Malta and the Maltese: A Study in Nineteenth Century Migration*, Georgian House, Melbourne, pp.1-2.

34. Vella, Vol.I., op.cit., pp.182-6.

35. Price, op.cit., p.2.
36. Laspina, op.cit., p.120.
37. Ibid., pp.80-9.
38. Ibid., pp.116-21 and pp.161-68.
39. Laspina observes that in 1645 the Knights feared an imminent attack on the islands by the Turks. 'As the debt,' he wrote, 'for the forthcoming war was enormous, all the silver available in the Island was coined into money...', op.cit., p.140.
40. Vella, Storja..., Vol.I., op.cit., p.186; W.A. Charlton, op.cit., p.28; Bowen-Jones, et al., op.cit., p.112.
41. Brydone, op.cit., p.47.
42. J. Holland Rose and W. Hardman, op.cit., pp.56-7.
43. E. Blaquiére, (1813), Letters from the Mediterranean Containing a Civil and Political Account of Sicily, Tripoly, Tunis, and Malta, Vol.II., H.Colbourn, London, pp.323-4; and Report of the Commission of 1812, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London; and H.W. Harding, (1980), Maltese Legal History Under British Rule. 1801-1836, Univ. of Malta, Valletta, p.67.
44. Harding, op.cit., pp.5-6.
45. Report of The Commission of 1812, op.cit.
46. Ibid.
47. In these courts the sitting Magistrate had the power to treat all cases under 20 shillings only if the parties consented. Otherwise they could take their case to one of the more senior courts. See Harding, op.cit., p.6.
48. Ball to Hobart, Sec. of State for War and the Colonies, 15 Nov. 1807, Library MSS.530, National Library, Valletta, Malta; Report of the Commission of 1812, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London.
49. Ibid., p.6; and A. Ball to Hobart, 'Report on the Revenue of Malta, with some Observations', 26 Dec. 1800, reproduced as Appx. II in Holland Rose and Hardman, op.cit., pp.553-4.
50. See Note 10.
51. Charlton, op.cit., p.28.
52. Ibid., p.28.
53. Ibid., p.28.
54. Ball to Hobart, Holland Rose and Hardman, op.cit., pp.554.
55. Vella, Vol.II, op.cit., p.341.
56. See Chapter Three.

57. Ibid.
58. See Debates of the Legislative Council, Session 1888, Sitting No.3 of 10 Apr. 1888, in Vol.X, Sittings 1 to 17, 21 Mar. 1888 - 26 Jun. 1888.
59. Vella, Vol.I, p.184.
60. P. Cassar, (1964), A Medical History of Malta, Wellcome Historical Medical Library, London, p.40.
61. Ibid., pp.70-1.
62. Price, op.cit., p.30.
63. More O'Ferrall to Grey 21 Feb. 1851, C.O.158/157, PRO, Kew, London.
64. Cassar, op.cit., p.41 and p.392.
65. Ibid., pp.55-6.
66. Price, op.cit., p.32.
67. Cassar, op.cit., pp.285-6.
68. Ibid., p.287.
69. Ibid., p.288.
70. Ibid., pp.286-7.
71. Ibid., pp.274-5.
72. Ball to Hobart, 'Report on the Revenue of Malta , with some Observations', in Hardman and Rose, op.cit., pp.553-4.
73. Ibid., p.554.
74. See A. Vella, (1969), The University of Malta, National Press, Malta, pp.29-30.
75. Ibid., pp.21-2.
76. Ibid., pp.29-30.
77. Ibid., pp.43-44.
78. Ibid., pp.44-45.
79. Vella, Storja ta' Malta, op.cit., p.185.
80. Price, op.cit., pp.1-2.
81. Ibid., pp.5-6; and Bowen-Jones, et. al., op.cit., p.109.
82. F. Ryan, The House of the Temple, Burns and Oates, p.103.
83. Ibid., p.103.
84. Price, op.cit., p.2 and p.208.



85. Vella, Vol.I, pp.155-6.
86. Ball to Hobart, 'Report on the Revenue of Malta, with some Observations', in Hardman and Holland Rose, op.cit., pp.553-4.
87. Ibid., p.554.
88. Ball to Hobart, 'Report on the Revenue of Malta, with some observations', Harmand & Holland Rose, op.cit., pp.553-4.
89. Vella, 'Storja...', op.cit., Vol.I, pp.136-7.
90. Ibid., p.138.
91. Ball to Hobart, 'Report on the Revenue of Malta, with some Observations', Hardman and Holland Rose, op.cit., pp.553-4.
92. J.F. Bossher, (1970), French Finances: From Business to Budgets, 1770-95, Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge, pp.6-7.
93. Price, op.cit., p.6; also Vella, op.cit., p.305-313.
94. Vella, ibid., p.346.
95. Ibid., p.346.
96. Ibid., pp.291-3.
97. Ibid., pp.91-100; p.291.
98. Ibid., pp.293-5; pp.301-4.
99. Brydone, op.cit., p.45.
100. Ibid. p.44.
101. Price, op.cit., p.1; and Bowen-Jones, et al., op.cit., p.116.
102. Price, op.cit., p.2.
103. Ibid., p.19.
104. H. Smith, op.cit., pp.xiv-xv; and Bowen-Jones, et al., op.cit., pp.110-1.
105. Smith, ibid., pp.xiv-xv.
106. Bowen-Jones, op.cit., p.112.
107. Vella. op.cit., p.274.
108. Bowen-Jones, op.cit., p.110; Harrison Smith, p.xv; Laferla, (1946), British Malta, Vol.I, Progress Press, Valletta, Introductory Chapter, pp.II-III; Henry Seddall, Malta: Past and Present, p.160 and p.162.
109. Vella, op.cit., p.341.
110. Holland Rose and Hardman, op.cit., p.xvi; also Schemershon, p.140. Samuel Taylor Coleridge makes a similar comment; see B.E. Rooke, The Friend, The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Routledge & Kegan

Paul, Princeton Univ. Press, p.536; Koster, op.cit., p.20; see Vella, Chapter entitled 'Malta taht il-Kavallieri', in Storja ta' Malta, Vol.II.

111. Cassar, op.cit., pp.55-6.

112. Brydone, op.cit., see footnote on p.44.

113. Bowen-Jones, et al., op.cit., p.110; see Brydone, p.45 for a description of the fortifications in Malta.

114. Ibid., p.45.

115. Price, op.cit., p.3

116. Holland Rose and Hardman, pp.xvii, pp.56-7 and p.554.

117. Vella, Storja ta' Malta, pp.357-59.

118. Ibid., pp.357-59, Seddall, op.cit., pp.160-163.

119. Ibid., p.163.

120. Seddall, pp.164-171; Harrison Smith, op.cit., Vol.I, p.xv.

121. Seddall, p.178; Vella, ibid., p.228; Holland Rose and Hardman, p.114.

122. For a comprehensive study of the siege of Valletta see Holland Rose and Hardman, op.cit.

123. Price. op.cit., p.3.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### A PUBLIC SERVICE IN ABEYANCE: 1800-1812

When the French finally surrendered in September 1800, the Maltese public service was in a state of collapse. The expulsion of the Order from Malta by the French, in 1798, had deprived it of a great number of its heads and some of its functionaries.[1] In turn, the Maltese revolt against the French and their subsequent siege of Valletta dealt the administration a further blow. Several of its members defected to the rebel cause while two years of siege gradually eroded its finances and its administrative functions.

After the capture of Valletta from the French the Maltese public service was to suffer further losses in its personnel. Several public servants left Malta with the French while some of those who remained were dismissed from the service as a consequence of 'their attachment to the cause of the enemy.' [2] In the next thirteen years, that is from September 1800 to October 1813, the period under examination in this Chapter, saw the emphasis was on reverting the administration to its previous system under the Order than on innovative measures. None of the developments that did take place in this period were intended to be of a permanent character, but were the result of a series of responses by British officers on the spot to the political situation developing in Malta and Europe.[3] By 1801, however, these responses had been shaped by Britain into a temporary policy which aimed chiefly at securing Maltese popular support for British annexation of Malta.

It is this policy and its implications for the public service which will provide the dominant theme of this Chapter. This Chapter aims to demonstrate that the Maltese public service was to be one of the principal vehicles through which this British policy was to be successfully implemented. It was mainly through the use of both the structures and the

offices of the Maltese public service that it became possible for Britain to adopt those measures which were likely to strengthen Maltese support for the formal incorporation of their island into the British Empire. But very little attention was paid at ensuring efficiency and public servants were left to carry out their duties without proper supervision or control. The result of this approach was, as we shall see, widespread negligence, confusion and even corruption.

Real British interest with Maltese public administration, however, became evident for the first time in 1812 when British annexation of Malta finally appeared to be certain. In that year a Commission of Inquiry was sent out to Malta from Britain with a brief to investigate fully into every aspect of Maltese public administration and to make recommendations, among other things, as to the system of government to be adopted in Malta and to suggest reforms in its public service.[4] In this Chapter our concern will be with the findings of this Commission as they relate to the administration. It is here that the implications of British policy in Malta for the administration will become generally apparent. Its recommendations, however, will be examined in the following Chapter where one dominant theme will be that of the reform of Maltese public administration in the period 1814-24.

#### EARLY BRITISH POLICY IN MALTA: ORIGINS AND FEATURES

At the turn of the nineteenth century one of the issues that divided the great powers was that of the future sovereignty of Malta. Although in practical terms Britain enjoyed complete mastery over the islands - its fortifications, arsenals, ports and even the government falling under its control - Britain was prevented from claiming exclusive sovereignty over Malta by a rival claim from Naples and by a demand from the Knights of St John for the restoration of the islands to their Order. The latter had the support of Russia whose Czar had been appointed Grandmaster of the Order by a sizeable section of its membership.[5] Although both these claims enjoyed

considerable legitimacy, Britain was not prepared to give up the islands, hoping, however, not to antagonise the Russian Czar unnecessarily in the process. It was a difficult situation and Britain could not avoid offending either Naples or Russia or both.[6]

This uncertainty over which power was to possess Malta succeeded in bringing forward into the reckoning the Maltese themselves. In the past the Maltese had enjoyed no say as to who should rule over them. Historically it was events in Europe or the Mediterranean that determined this. But, in 1798, this established pattern was broken by the revolt of the Maltese against their new French masters. Their determination in carrying out their revolt astounded the better trained and equipped French and won British admiration. The revolt, however, would not have succeeded without outside help, although the Maltese were apparently determined to see it through whatever the final outcome.[7] This by itself served to impress upon the powers contesting for possession of Malta that, until peace was restored in Europe, it would be difficult for any power to hold Malta without Maltese support. Sir Ralph Abercromby, British commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean, in fact observed that,

'if the inhabitants [of Malta]...can firmly be attached to the government under which they live, it will be extremely difficult to wrest Malta out of their possession.'[8]

What was required, therefore, from each individual power, was a policy that would attach the Maltese to itself.

Naples, the Order, Russia, and even France, which were all anxious to see Britain out of Malta, were forced to depend on their agents or on local supporters to promote their interests in Malta. Between 1800 and 1802 these agents were particularly active spreading rumours and agitating the population against Britain, while all the time painting rosy pictures of the economic prosperity and political liberties that the Maltese would enjoy were they to come under the dominion of the power each represented.[9]

Being in absolute control of the islands Britain had no need to resort to such methods, but British officers in Malta were aware that some response to this agitation was expected from them. Fortunately, a sizeable proportion of the Maltese population, which included the peasants, the labouring poor, and the rural nobility and clergy, had already decided in favour of British annexation of Malta. It was on the basis of this support that these officers aimed to build their response and thereby strengthen British hopes of annexing the islands. Thus the whole thrust of British policy in Malta in this period was to be directed towards attaching all classes of Maltese society to the prospect of British rule.

The architect of British policy in Malta was Captain Alexander Ball. Ball had been despatched to Maltese waters in 1798 to direct the naval blockade of the French in Valletta after news of the Maltese revolt had reached Nelson. But the French refused to yield and in 1799 Ball landed in Malta and took personal charge of the provisional government established by the rebels. The Maltese were so impressed by the leadership qualities of this naval captain that they elected him to be their "Chief" and assigned him the role of Governor of the Maltese islands.[10] After the capture of Valletta the civil administration of the island became temporarily entrusted in his hands.[11] It was his view that Britain could continue to hold Malta indefinitely only if the Maltese, whose wishes in the circumstances were of prime importance, were given 'a material interest in preserving British rule in Malta.'[12] Ball was so convinced that this was the correct approach to be adopted that he embarked on its implementation without waiting for formal instructions or approval from home. But within less than a year Britain had adopted this policy as its own. This will become evident a little later when we examine the Colonial Secretary's instructions to Charles Cameron who in May 1801 was appointed Civil Commissioner of Malta.

The main elements of this policy were mainly four. First, the British

had to show the utmost respect to the Maltese Catholic Church, according it in Malta the status of established church. The Maltese clergy, like their counterparts in Italy and Spain, tended to exercise enormous influence over the population. Many priests in Malta had been leading members of the revolt against the French. Some, as in the case of Canon Saverio Caruana in Malta, and Dun Saver Cassar in Gozo, had even acted as military commanders.[13]

Second, it was recognised that the Maltese were as equally attached to the paternalistic tradition and institutions established by the government of the Order as they were to their religion and that somehow these had to be continued. In times of crisis or famine it was this tradition and these institutions that tended to substantially minimise the sufferings of a relatively vulnerable population.[14] Although the government of the Order was autocratic, its paternalism had secured for it, centuries of untroubled rule. Indeed, in the last decades of the eighteenth century Maltese disenchantment with the rule of the Order had come about precisely because the latter had been so weakened and impoverished by events in Europe that it was no longer able to sustain its paternalism for very much longer.[15]

In September 1800 as a consequence of the revolt against the French and the loss of the lucrative trade in manufactured cotton, poverty and unemployment were to be found everywhere in Malta. Food was scarce and disease arising from malnutrition, was common.[16] Ball fully understood that, under such conditions, the degree of British readiness and willingness to assume the paternal role once performed by the Order of St John in Malta, was certain to become the yardstick against which the Maltese would judge the advantages of British annexation. He was also certain that a half-hearted attempt on this score by Britain would be fully exploited by the agents of the other powers in Malta.

Third with one or two exceptions, native Maltese were allowed to hold offices, at every level of the local administration. In the past, offices

in the public service were bestowed on and held by Maltese at the pleasure of the grandmaster of the day, and very few of these offices were of an executive nature. Even where this was so, as in the case of the 'Uditori', ultimate authority tended to rest in the person of a high-ranking member of the Order, notably a Grand Cross or the Grandmaster himself.[17] But because of their participation in the expulsion of the French from Malta the inhabitants had come to feel that, with the exception of the offices of Governor and Chief [or Public] Secretary, all offices in the administration should be filled from amongst them.[18]

The fourth and final feature of the policy adopted by Ball was related to the question of government. It was his view that Britain must not surrender any portion of its political or military authority in Malta. Keeping all authority firmly entrenched in British hands had two advantages. First, it would prevent Maltese agents acting on behalf of one of the other powers from gaining influence over the government. Second, it served to delay any decision as to the future system of government to be adopted in Malta. On the grounds that nothing could be done until a general peace was restored in Europe, the system of government in Malta was to continue to resemble, as far as it was possible, the autocratic structures that had once characterised the government of the ancien regime.[19] This was not in line with the wishes of the local nobility whose members had come to expect an important role in the government of Malta. They were, as a result, to continue for the next twelve years, to press for some degree of authority in government affairs.[20]

For a brief period between 1802 and 1803, when the Treaty of Amiens seemed destined to force Britain to quit Malta, it appeared, however, that in order to ensure Maltese loyalty to Britain, the British government was prepared to give way on this issue as well. Acting as the true champion of Maltese interests the British government forced the other powers to agree that, in any future restoration of the government of the Order, the Maltese



were to enjoy an equal share of authority, power and influence as that of members of the Order.[21] But the provisions of the Treaty were never implemented and after 1803 the challenge to British annexation of Malta began to recede rapidly. In consequence Britain was no longer prepared to countenance Maltese participation in government beyond what it had been under the "ancien" regime.

Of the above four features, two have a special relevance for this study. The first is that relating to the issue of paternal government. We have seen in the previous Chapter that during the time of the government of the Order one result of the government's involvement in nearly every aspect of Maltese social and political life was the growth of a relatively large bureaucracy. After 1800 the policy of rapidly re-establishing the old paternal structures and institutions of the island, combined with pressures to accommodate as many Maltese as possible, resulted in an even larger bureaucracy.

The second feature concerns the role and position that Maltese office-holders were to occupy in the new administration. As will be developed further in this Chapter, on this subject as well Britain was to defer to Maltese wishes, to the extent, that under early British rule nearly every administrative office in the local public service was occupied by a Maltese.

A third element, that concerned with the issue of government, is relevant only in that it was the cause of Anglo-Maltese conflict for more than a century and, because of the form of colonial government adopted in Malta after 1813, (see Chapters 4 and 5), this issue could not avoid intruding into many aspects of Maltese administration.

#### PATERNAL GOVERNMENT RESTORED

The restoration of paternalism by which Ball hoped to strengthen Maltese attachment to Britain, thereby nullifying the efforts of the other powers to gain influence in Malta, involved the re-establishment of the

several departments and semi-autonomous bodies that once constituted the complex administration of the Order (see Diagram 2:1). As a strategy it had the advantage of placing in British hands the extensive powers once exercised by the Grandmasters and of ensuring, as in the past, the dependency of almost every section of Maltese society on the government.[22]

One of Ball's first measures was the reconstitution of the Segnatura. Under the ancien regime this council, consisting of the Grandmaster and four Maltese assistants known as 'Uditori', represented the highest formal expression of paternalism and absolutism. At its sessions, as previously discussed, the sovereign's subjects were permitted to present their petitions, however trivial their nature, directly to him and he dispensed patronage, clemency or justice according to each case. It was because the Segnatura allowed the Sovereign to take personal cognizance of the claims of the most humble of his subjects without allowing any appeal from his decision but to himself which made it an expression of paternalism and absolutism. Between September 1800 and February 1801 it was Ball who presided over the sessions of this Council.[23]

The loyalty and support of the literate and professional classes Ball sought to secure by the rapid re-establishment of the University of Studies. Within a month of the surrender of Valletta he appointed its rector and staff and held the inaugural ceremony.[24] The monopoly once exercised by state and church over the university was re-instituted, a cleric being appointed as rector and 'Protector', while the government continued to exercise control over appointments and the administration of its finances.[25]

The attachment of the peasants and of the labouring poor Ball sought to secure in three principal ways. First, by the provision of employment; second, by the provision of grain, the staple food of the population, at a particularly moderate price; third, by a readiness to champion Maltese

interests against those of other nationalities.

As has already been observed in the previous Chapter, the livelihood of a vast proportion of the Maltese lower classes depended almost entirely on the island's cotton industry which had been severely disrupted by events in Malta and Europe.[26] To counter some of the effects of this slump Ball initiated various schemes of public works and public support. Among these were schemes involving roadworks and the maintenance of public buildings in several towns and villages.[27] Attempts were also made to encourage horticulture and fishery. In the first case, gardens were provided at government expense for the chiefs of the villages. The latter were mainly ex-deputies of the dissolved provisional Congress whom Ball had appointed to act as sitting magistrates in their village with responsibility for law and order.[28] In the second case, 'a species of fishery...' was created 'on the southern coast of Sicily'.[29] The boats for the purpose were also provided by the government. Ball defended his schemes with the Secretary of State on the ground that the people, in the absence of other employment, depended on such schemes and expected, as in the past, the government to provide them.[30]

In September 1800 problems of unemployment were compounded by the imminent threat of famine. Malta had never been capable of producing more than a third of the grain required by its population, the rest having to be imported, notably from Sicily. For centuries the latter had been one of the principal responsibilities of the Università'. When the British entered Valletta there were only eight days' supply of grain in the island, the Università' was thoroughly bankrupt, and the export of grain prohibited in Sicily and extremely scarce in the rest of Italy.[31] To stave off hunger from the population Ball, with credit from the home government, undertook responsibility for furnishing the island with abundant supplies of grain from Asia Minor, where he had appointed agents for the purpose.

The grain, as used to happen in the past, was sold to the inhabitants

at a lower price since 'the very high price at which it was bought exceeded the ability of the inhabitants to purchase at that rate...'[32] This measure, as Ball pointed out, apart from demonstrating the readiness of Britain to act in the same paternal manner as the Order used to do, thereby impressing the Maltese with the advantages that would accrue from British rule, served to reinforce the lesson which the Maltese had learnt at the time of the siege. That is, that it was to Maltese advantage to prefer British rule

'knowing we have always the means of punishing them, and they are now more sensible of it than ever, from their having experienced what they would not believe before, that a British squadron can block them up and starve them in the winter months.'[33]

The responsibility for distributing the grain and other imports, and for supervising the markets was vested in a reconstituted 'massa frumentaria' or Università as it was called by the Maltese. By the re-establishment of this institution Ball hoped to gain other advantages. On the one hand he hoped to humour the nationalist sentiments and aspirations of the Maltese upper classes, especially the local nobility, for whom the Università represented a symbol of ancient local autonomy,[34] but without sacrificing any portion of British authority. The Università did not regain any of its ancient powers but retained only those which the knights of St John had allowed it to exercise.[35] On the other hand it served to reconcile to British rule those who in the past had invested their savings in the Università and had neither received any interest nor did they entertain any hope of recovering their savings from a bankrupt Università.[36] Ball, rather than declaring it to be so, unconditionally assumed responsibility for its debts on behalf of the government. By a tax on imported wines and spirits he managed to pay depositors the interests on their investments and to secure for them those investments.[37] The Monte di Pieta, an institution which had been similarly bankrupted by the French, he also reconstituted to the satisfaction of those who held deposits with it.[38]

A final example can be found in Ball's determination to defend Maltese interests against those of foreign allies. One example would suffice to demonstrate this argument and to further reinforce the importance that Ball attached to the necessity of restoring paternal government as a way of attaching the people to Britain. The French, following the capture of Malta from the Order of St John, had turned the Holy Infirmary (the civil hospital) into a military hospital. The civil hospital was transferred to the convent of St Magdalene, also in Valletta.[39] On the departure of the French the British retained the Holy Infirmary as a military hospital for the exclusive use of British troops. The civil hospital they assigned for the use of Neapolitan troops. Ball, although fully aware that in the past the expenditure on the civil hospital represented the most expensive item on the government's budget, strongly opposed the move. He insisted and secured after two months of haggling, the return of the hospital for the use of poor Maltese civilians, despite the objections of the Neapolitan commander who deplored the fact that Ball 'had preferred the Maltese to the troops of His Majesty.'[40]

Within a mere six months Ball had succeeded in setting the old administration of the Knights of St John going again. The Segnatura, the Università, the Monte di Pieta, the Segreto, now called the Establishment for the Administration of Public Property, the University of Studies, the hospitals, the health and quarantine establishments, the customs, the post office and the law courts were all functioning. All these, and others, constituted a large number of public offices. Ball resisted pressures on him to appoint British officers to many of these situations. According to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who for a time served in Malta as Ball's private secretary and as Chief secretary, it was Ball's view that

'with the exception of the [office of] Governor, and [that] of the Public secretary...there was no civil office which ought to be given to any but the Maltese.'[41]

He strongly believed that a different policy would

'affront the higher classes and alienate the affections of all, not only without any imaginable advantage but with the certainty of great loss...,[for] to deprive...the middle and lower classes of such places as they had been accustomed to hold, would be cruel.'

Ball implemented his policy without any reservation. To every headship or public office, except that of Public secretary, he appointed only from amongst the Maltese. Many offices were distributed as rewards 'for services rendered'[42] to those who had been leading members of the revolt against the French. Canon Francesco Saverio Caruana, at the time of the revolt commander of the Maltese country battalions, was appointed rector of the University of studies.[43] Similarly, Vincenzo Borg, commander of the B'kara battalions was appointed to be one of the four administrators responsible for the management of the public property.[44] Felice Cutajar, another Maltese nationalist, became Pro-Secretary or second secretary to the Government.[45]

Ball's first administration came to an end in February 1801. The developments that occurred after this time were to prove how correct Ball had been in his assessment of the situation in Malta and in the way it should be handled. The first of these developments arose as a consequence of the rivalry existing between Ball and Major Pigot, the British officer in command of the British garrison.[46] Sir Ralph Abercromby, British military commander in the Mediterranean, had vested Pigot with full authority over the Maltese islands but directed him to employ Ball in the direction of the civil administration.[47] Ball and Pigot had never got on well together and in February 1801 the latter determined to remove Ball and to undertake, in addition to his military duties, full responsibility for civil affairs himself.[48]

This relatively sudden change provoked rumblings of discontent among many sections of Maltese society. It also gave agents of foreign powers in Malta a chance to give their faltering campaign against British rule a new impetus.[49] The Maltese were totally opposed to a system of government that combined civil and military matters under the authority of the officer

in charge of the garrison. According to Ball the Maltese were apprehensive that under a system of garrison or military government they would experience similar

'oppressions to what they suffered under the government of the Order of St John, as they are now placed in the second order of the state, the military being the first.'[50]

Reports of growing agitation and discontent from Malta impressed Lord Hobart, the Colonial Secretary, with the need to act. Heeding Ball's advice, in May 1801 he appointed Charles Cameron to be Civil Commissioner in Malta thereby divesting Pigot of responsibility for civil affairs.[51] However, Cameron was instructed to consult with Pigot regularly and was not to undertake any measure until he had obtained the approval of the military authorities in Malta.[52] The rest of Lord Hobart's instructions to Cameron may be considered, because of the approximation they bore to the policy adopted by Ball in Malta, as the point at which the policy of an individual British officer on the spot was translated into formal British government policy.[53]

Cameron's task in Malta was threefold. First, in every sphere of life he was to maintain the system established by Ball. Indeed, he was not to allow any departure from it unless dictated by questions of defence or by measures the necessity of which was

'so evidently beneficial and desirable, as to leave no doubt of its expediency, or of its being generally acceptable to the wishes, the feelings, and even the prejudices of the inhabitants.'[54]

For this reason, the administration of justice, of the police, of public property and of every other institution was to 'continue to be exercised in conformity to the laws and institutions of the ancient government of the Order.' Those institutions which in the past had their funds entrusted to the local Treasury and/or which received support from this source, such as the University of Studies, the hospitals, the foundling hospital and that of Santo Spirito in Mdina, and the Ospizio, were to continue receiving them.

Cameron was to keep under his 'immediate superintendence and inspection' the Università and the Monte di Pieta. With respect to the Università, Hobart wrote that,

'however much at variance with general principles it may appear for a government to retain in its own hands the exclusive privilege of buying and selling corn, I have no hesitation to give my opinion that in Malta...the system which has been so long established in this respect should not be altered for the present.'

Ball had argued that

'the safety of the Island in time of war and the maintenance of the labouring poor in time of peace are inseparably connected'[55]

with the government grain monopoly. The Colonial Secretary signified his agreement with this view in words almost identical to those of Ball, adding that the Università provided

'a constant and useful check over the people in the hands of the government [and] ought to be adhered to as an arrangement no less politic on our part than provident towards the Maltese themselves.'[56]

Cameron's second task was to endeavour to impress upon the Maltese the readiness of the British government to protect their interests and to give full consideration to their views. To this extent, Cameron was instructed that respecting the manufacture and export of cotton thread, the chief article of the Maltese export and industry, that

'it becomes necessary in order to tranquilise the minds of the people, which appear to have been artfully alarmed upon the subject, to assure them that every necessary protection and encouragement will continue to be given to this important object...'

In his relations with the Maltese, Cameron was to use every endeavour

'...to meet their wishes, to show yourself indulgent even to their prejudices and to omit no fair opportunity of conciliating their affection and ensuring their fidelity to the government...'

Finally, Cameron was to acquire for Britain an extensive knowledge of the true extent, powers and functioning of the administration of Malta under the government of the Order of St John. He was instructed to forward to London several reports regarding the actual revenue and its mode of collection, the management of public property, the quarantine establishment, the hospitals, and



'a return of the Civil Establishment of Malta, specifying the name of each person holding an employment therein, the nature of that employment, and the salary derived from it.'

On his arrival in Malta, Cameron, who it was said was received as some sort of Messiah,[57] issued a proclamation that may be considered as almost unique in the history of the early 19th century British Empire both in its language and in the message of paternalism which it conveyed. In it the British monarch was described by Cameron as

'a King who is the father of his subjects, who protects the weak against the strong, the poor against the rich.'[58]

The Maltese were to be assured of his affection towards them and of his paternal care, the latter extending

'to the hospitals, and other charitable establishments, to the education of youth, to orphans, to the poor, and to all those who recur to his beneficence.'

Cameron promised the Maltese that his administration would aim to reflect and implement His Majesty's wishes. 'My door', he told them,

'shall be open to all; I will hear everyone's pleas...and above all, I shall devote myself to the means of promoting the cultivation of cotton, the manufacture of yarn, and of importing and maintaining an abundance of food in these Islands, and of making Malta the Emporium of the Mediterranean and the seat of content.'

However, the international situation soon reasserted its influence over affairs in Malta and Cameron's rule came to an abrupt end before anything could be achieved. In October 1801 France advanced proposals for peace with Britain, but one of the French conditions involved the restoration of Malta to the Order of St John and the evacuation of all British troops from the island.[59] In March 1802, at Amiens, Britain reluctantly agreed to French terms, nonetheless, making every effort to protect British strategic interests in Malta by the inclusion of certain clauses within the final treaty. Article X of the Treaty of Amiens by and large incorporated most of the British demands.[60] Malta was to be declared neutral, its neutrality to be guaranteed by France, Britain, and the other powers. A Maltese branch of the Order was to be established before the Order was to be allowed to return to Malta, and that the members

of the Maltese branch were to 'be competent to hold every office and to enjoy every privilege...as the other knights.' Furthermore, it was stipulated that

'the municipal, revenue, civil, judicial, and other offices under the Government of the Island shall be filled at least in the proportion of one-half by native inhabitants of Malta, Gozo and Comino.'

Similarly, the garrison was at all times to be composed of one-half Maltese under the command of Maltese officers.[61] It was the first time, since the expulsion of the French, that Britain gave recognition to a Maltese political role in the government of Malta.

But the Maltese, despite its favourable provisions, rejected the Treaty. Indeed, their leaders openly declared their intention to resist the return of an impoverished Order to Malta and asserted that since they had been the principal actors in the liberation of their country they alone possessed the right to decide on its government. To prove their point they assembled in Congress and proceeded to elect His Britannic Majesty as their lawful sovereign.[62] Once again agitation in Malta reached a new peak, for many public servants who had openly supported the movement for British annexation of Malta were openly abused by the agents of the Order and of France. Alexander Macaulay, the Public Secretary, in a letter to London observed that he was endeavouring to reconcile those around him 'to their fate' after the British withdrawal.[63] Because the situation in Malta was threatening to become highly unstable, in 1802, the Colonial Office replaced Cameron with Alexander Ball as Civil Commissioner in the islands. He alone was considered capable of handling the political situation in Malta since he alone had gained the confidence of many of the Maltese leaders and of the population at large.[64]

The Treaty, however, provided only a brief respite from hostilities since neither Britain nor the other powers were prepared to carry out its provisions.[65] The decision by Britain in February 1803 'to suspend all measures for evacuating the island' infuriated France and by May of that

year the two nations were once again at war.[66] At this point in progress British ministers became less reluctant to declare their intention to annexe Malta. In both Houses of Parliament the general conclusion was the same. Malta, it was decided, 'was to be considered as of infinite importance to the strengthening and security of our Empire in India.'[67] This new openness with regard to British intentions in Malta was also reflected in developments in Malta itself. Soon Britain began to expand her military and naval presence in Malta. Already, Malta was beginning to serve as the main naval servicing base for the squadrons of the British navy in the Mediterranean Sea.[68]

After 1803 a new development began to make itself apparent. This development was occasioned, as we shall see below, both by the circumstances of the war and by the gradual realization on Britain's part that as the war dragged on the challenge to its position in Malta began to recede rapidly. It was the increase in the number of British office-holders within the Maltese public service. As already observed, Ball was set against the idea of giving offices to persons other than Maltese. Apart from the notion of fairness implied in such a policy, Ball held that 'the number of...employments to be conferred would give considerable influence to His Majesty's civil representative' in Malta.[69] During his first administration Ball had appointed only one British officer, namely Alexander Macaulay, who was to assume the duties of Public [Chief] Secretary and Treasurer.[70] Lord Hobart, the Colonial Secretary, in his instructions to Cameron did not pronounce himself on the issue. But neither did he go against the practice adopted by Ball. Indeed, apart from sanctioning Macaulay's appointment, he made only one other appointment, that of William Eton as Superintendent of Quarantine.[71]

The motives for Eton's appointment, however, appeared to be well based. In the first instance, Eton was considered to be an expert on quarantine establishments and was known to have some knowledge of that in

Malta. He was, therefore, expected to furnish the British government with a report on the establishment there.[72] Second, and perhaps more to the point, his appointment was intended to secure for Britain control over a vital source of information. The property, including private letters and documents, of persons subjected to quarantine were opened and examined by the authorities during the process of disinfection.[73] As a result information crucial to British interests in Malta and to the security of the island became readily available to the British authorities.

The situation in terms of British officers serving in the Maltese public service remained basically unchanged until, ironically, Cameron was replaced by Ball in 1802. In the next decade the number of British public servants holding full-time situations in the Maltese public service was to rise from two to fourteen.

One reason was language. The number of Maltese capable of speaking or writing English was almost negligible. Thus in 1802, because of the hectic diplomatic activity caused by the Treaty of Amiens, the Rev Laing, vicar and private secretary to Ball, was added to the civil establishments. Laing eventually stayed on to become Chief Secretary.[74] In 1807 Ball made a specific request for permission to 'employ additional assistance' of public officers familiar with English to help in the preparation of the local public accounts for inspection by HM's Commissioners at the Treasury in London.[75] Until then government accounts were kept in Italian (the official language of the ancien regime), and later transmitted to London with a report by Ball. Both the Treasury and the Commissioners for Auditing Public Accounts in London, were unhappy with the way the accounts were kept in Malta and did not hesitate to say so.[76] There is, however, no indication whether British officers were appointed, but in that year Ball transferred Vincent Casolani, a Maltese who had undergone part of his education in England, to the office of Paymaster to the Government.[77]

The increase in British commerce to Malta may also have accounted for

the appointment of some British office-holders, especially as a result of Napoleon's 'continental system'. The number of British ships calling at Malta increased beyond all expectations and with it perhaps the need for English-speaking officers.[78] This might explain the appointment of William England as Head of Customs, of Dr Franklin as President of the Board of Health, a body charged with monitoring the application of the quarantine regulations, of Henry Fletcher as Head of the shipping Licencing Office, and of Charles Livingstone as Head Jurat [Giurat] of the Università'.[79] The latter two officers were appointed to their situations by General Hildebrand Oakes who had succeeded to the office of Civil Commissioner in Malta after Ball's death in 1809.[80] Oakes was also responsible for the appointment of William Tyers as Treasurer in 1811. Until then, the duties of Public Secretary and of Public Treasurer were combined in one office. With the appointment of Tyers the duties of these two offices were permanently separated to the benefit, as we shall see, of the revenue.[81] Finally, other British office-holders occupied various offices ranging from the headship of the Registry and Printing Office to Clerkships.[82]

Despite this increase in the number of British office-holders the overwhelming majority of administrative offices continued to be held by Maltese, and of the former only two, Livingstone and England, held offices which the Maltese may have considered as traditionally theirs. Livingstone held the office of Head Jurat [Giurat] of the Università', a prestigious office traditionally held by a member of the local aristocracy. William England as Head of Customs held an office that under the administration of the Order was farmed out to Maltese individuals.[83]

There is no evidence, however, to suggest that at this time this increase of British office-holders produced an unfavourable reaction among the Maltese. What it did, however, was to encourage the growth of a British enclave within the Maltese public service thereby accentuating the process

of division that had already began to make itself apparent at many levels of contact between the Maltese and the British in Malta.

Coleridge observed, for example, that during his stay in Malta 'that weakness so frequent in Englishmen, and so injurious to our interest abroad, of despising the inhabitants of other countries' was already in evidence.[84] According to the account of another British resident, by 1812 the division between the two sides had grown wider. He wrote:

'It would be natural to imagine that after our being so long in possession of this island, a greater disposition to mix with each other would have, ere this, manifested itself between the natives and English residents...however...there is a marked and mutual coldness observed to exist...'[85]

This division had become the more obvious after 1806, by which time the British civil community in Malta had expanded rapidly, especially in the field of commerce. The main reason for this expansion was the imposition in that year, by Napoleon, of a continental blockade against British goods. British merchants, eager to penetrate this blockade, found that Malta, because of its strategic position, provided them with an ideal base from which British commodities could be smuggled into the continent.[86] In 1808 Malta's position as an important trading base was further enhanced by the American Embargo Act which considerably raised the demand for Levantine produce in London.[87] Harlow calculates that around this time the value of goods transhipped from Malta to other destinations was about £800,000 annually.[88]

This was indeed an important turnaround in the economic fortunes of the Malta. In September 1800 the labouring poor, as we have seen earlier, depended almost entirely for their livelihood on schemes provided by the government. Many members of the literate and middle classes, and some members of the aristocracy had become similarly dependent on situations in the public service for a secure if, however, moderate income. But between 1805 and 1812, commercial activity around Malta's harbours replaced government schemes as the main employment, the cotton industry still being

in a state of slump. Maltese from every strata of society found employment within this commercial activity and such was the demand for labour that wages increased beyond all expectations.[89]

As a consequence the cost of living rose too, with the price of many commodities and of house rents setting the pace. The latter was especially marked in Valletta and the towns bordering the main harbours and the Government 'found it necessary to make extra allowances to many persons employed in the public service.'[90] House rents in fact had risen in response to the demands for housing occasioned by an influx of foreigners seeking to set up in commerce, and of Maltese attracted to the harbour areas by the prevailing employment opportunities there.[91]

Needless to say some were adversely affected by the rise in prices and the number of unhoused poor, especially in Valletta, rose dramatically.[92] But all considered the impact of the cost of living was somewhat reduced by the Government. First, through its monopoly position with regard to the importation and sale of grain, the government ensured stability in the price of this staple commodity. Second by maintaining its own rents - government owned about one-third of all commercial, domestic and arable property in Malta - at their old levels, the government managed to some extent to counteract the rise that was constantly taking place in the private sector.[93] Finally, several of the charitable institutions managed by the Government served to bring some relief to those who were destitute. As a result, therefore, of this unprecedented expansion in commerce, and the ability of the Government to partially temper the rise in the cost of living, poverty in the towns and villages declined rapidly. The greater part of the population, especially the working classes, credited this prosperous state of their island solely to Malta's connection with Britain.[94]

The local aristocracy, whose attachment to Britain was not less than that of other classes, was not, however, to be satisfied merely by economic



MAP 3:1





progress. Its members desired a share in the government of Malta preferably in the shape of a re-constituted Consiglio Popolare. Their hopes had been boosted by British provisions in the Treaty of Amiens which guaranteed the Maltese an equal share in the government, administration and defence of their island. But after the collapse of the Treaty in 1803, these hopes were somewhat dented for Britain failed to implement these provisions. By 1809 the Maltese aristocracy had become painfully aware that their hopes for representative government were fading rapidly. In that year, shortly before his death they pleaded with Ball to allow them to reconvene their Congresso, for they feared that if the matter was postponed any longer their claim for some form of representative government would be dismissed completely once peace was concluded.[95] Ball did not accede to their wishes and matters came to a head soon after his death with the appointment of General Hildebrand Oakes, the commander of the garrison, as Civil Commissioner.[96]

In 1811, a petition demanding the revival of the Consiglio Popolare, independent tribunals, the adoption of the jury system as practised in England, a free press, and a constitution that united their 'ancient, free, and only legitimate government with that of the English Constitution,' was drawn up for transmission to London.[97] But before this could be done Oakes intervened, publicly attacking its organisers and dismissing from their office the handful of public servants who refused to withdraw their names from the petition.[98] The remaining petitioners directed the matter straight to London, protesting at this 'terror of a power without limit', and challenged the British government to declare whether Malta was considered

'as appertaining to the United Kingdom...[or] whether it is His Royal pleasure that we be considered as an independent nation...'[99]

Although Oakes dismissed this challenge as the work of 'a few turbulent and factious individuals',[100] the Colonial Office could not allow it to pass without serious consideration. Britain was now determined

to annexe Malta and was not prepared to allow any adverse development to obstruct its plans, especially when these appeared so close to fruition. The time had come for Britain to take full stock of the situation in Malta and to map out the formal process for the institutionalisation of British authority in the islands at the first available opportunity. For this purpose, in May 1812, Lord Liverpool appointed a Commission of Inquiry. The three members who formed this Commission were William Burrows, William a'Court, and General Hildebrand Oakes, the latter already serving in Malta as Civil Commissioner. The task of the Commission was to investigate fully and to make recommendations regarding the future government and judicial system of Malta, its public service, its finances, commerce and agriculture, and its ecclesiastical establishments.[101] The contents of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry of 1812 will be examined in this and the following Chapter.

#### THE IMPLICATIONS OF BRITISH POLICY IN MALTA

The history of the Maltese public service in the period 1800-12 has acquired a notoriety which has remained with it to this day. Confusion, arising from lack of experience, and negligence were the principal characteristics of the first few years of British rule. An eye-witness wrote,

'...when public letters were received, if no answer was required, they were thrown on the floor of the writing-room...If any answer was scribbled out, in the rough, it was merely on the back of an old letter or any piece of paper nearest at hand...Nothing had been copied into the books for months...The letters and corresponding documents parted company the moment they were read - they were all thrown into a vortex.'[102]

This report received strong support, in 1835, from William Thornton, the Auditor-General in Malta who, faced with a request for a comprehensive report on the finances of the colony since the arrival of the British, pleaded that he wished to 'respectfully submit, whether it can in any way be desirable that the preparation of the statement for those early years should ever be attempted', since nothing could '...be stated with any degree of confidence...'[103]

The explanation for this state of affairs arose from the fact, mentioned earlier, that the Maltese public service had, in the two years from the arrival of the French in Malta until their expulsion, suffered the loss of many of its most experienced employees. Those whom Ball appointed in their place, as Ball himself was to admit, had not always been up to the task required of them. He lamented in one of his last despatches from Malta that he had had no proof either of their ability or of their integrity.[104]

The aim of British policy in Malta was to give the Maltese a vested interest in preserving British rule. This meant, as was seen earlier, giving a large number of Maltese offices in the public service. The criterion was, known loyalty to Britain or potential allegiance based on self-interest. Those placed at the head of establishments came principally from the first category.[105] Others were recruited on the basis of a personal petition to the Civil Commissioner or on the recommendation of heads. By 1802, some Maltese families, notably the Casolani's, had already established themselves prominently within the ranks of the public service.[106] By 1812 the number of Maltese employed with the local public service had risen to almost 600 persons - a fact which the Report of the Commission of 1812 unhesitatingly attributed

'to the particular line of policy at the time adopted of endeavouring to acquire popularity and to attach individuals to the new order of things' by the creation of numerous offices.[107]

For Britain the Maltese public service was no more than a means towards an end and, as a consequence, very little attention was given to performance. Nothing was to be done or said which might give offence to the Maltese occupying its offices. Every head of establishment was left to run it as he pleased, with little or no supervision at all. As a consequence, corruption was added to the already existing confusion and negligence.

An exception to the above rule seems to have been made in the case of the Courts. Ball had informed the Secretary of State, in 1805, that he had

assumed the powers once vested in the Grandmaster of confirming, removing or transferring judges from one court to another during an annual "scrutiny".[108] The purpose for this measure, according to Ball, was not only because the scrutiny 'was an established and popular usage of the ancient government to remove the judges...', but also because it operated 'as an excitement to the faithful discharge of their duty and at the same time affords the government a powerful check over a body of men' capable of exercising great influence over the government itself.[109] But the Maltese petition of 1811 demanding independent tribunals and the Report of the Commission of Inquiry of 1812 which described the Maltese judicial system as that 'great mischief' demonstrated that the "scrutiny" had proved to be both unpopular and ineffective.[110]

According to the Commission many of those charged with offences, whether innocent or guilty, were left

'to languish for years in prison at the mercy of the Judges, whose conduct may be influenced by caprice, or even by a baser motive.'

Other serious forms of corruption and negligence, according to the Commission could be found 'wherever the Maltese are concerned with matters of finance.' The failure of the hospitals, for example, to submit their accounts to the local treasury for more than four years could not, in the opinion of the Commission, but 'give rise to suspicions of extreme negligence at least.' This was especially true since the Commissioners had not been sufficiently convinced either of the need or the reasons put forward by the Board of administrators to justify the large increase in the expenditure of the hospital establishments.[111] Neither was the Commission satisfied that the accounts submitted by the Board of Administration charged with the management of public property were sufficiently explanatory of similarly large increases in their expenditure. They deplored the fact that

'the Administrators have been in the habit generally of incurring expenses even to a considerable amount, without no authority than their own minutes made from verbal communications...'[112]

The Jurats of the Università, an institution that had received over £100,000 in British subsidies to procure bulk supplies of grain, were similarly found guilty of mismanagement. According to the Commission it was impossible for its members to make any sense of the accounts of this establishment and they were shocked to discover that

'far from finding the finances of the Università in that flourishing state, which we were led to expect, we find them in point of fact rather worse than nothing.'

To all this was to be added the fact that in nearly every department the collection of the revenue was in arrears. Some improvement had taken place in this respect thanks, according to the Commission, to the endeavours of William Tyers, an Englishman, who had been appointed Treasurer by Oakes in 1811. This led the Commission to conclude that

'whatsoever names, titles or offices to be given to the Maltese, the efficient and responsible situations, in all money transactions be universally confined to an Englishman.'

British officers, the Report observed, were now no longer in the same position as in September 1800 when lack of knowledge of Maltese administrative and financial matters made them dependent on the Maltese for their management.

Fortunately for Britain, by 1812, the tide of international politics was pounding in its favour to an extent that Maltese acquiescence to British rule, while still desirable, was no longer essential. Napoleon's invasion of the latter had led Russia to abandon its claim to Malta while the severe losses incurred by the French in the campaign had virtually eliminated the French challenge to British mastery of the Mediterranean.[113] The majority of the Maltese had obtained what they wanted, the reconstitution of their paternal establishments to shield them in times of crisis or from inflation during times of prosperity, while the enormous expansion in commerce had somewhat freed the population from its extreme dependence on government schemes for employment. The Commission of Inquiry of 1812 was thus able to conclude that what the majority of the Maltese desired in the very near

future, was a 'more intimate connection with Britain.'[114]

Those persons who according to the Report of the Commission were dissatisfied with British rule were mainly members of the local nobility who in its view had failed to share, as other classes had done, in the general prosperity of the island. The Report alleged that these tended to look with a somewhat jealous eye on the prosperity surrounding them and it was this jealousy that served to explain their agitation for representative institutions.

Everything considered, Britain had succeeded admirably in its determination to acquire and hold on to Malta. As Fay has observed 'nations do not stumble into Empire. It only seems so...They work for it, and when it is won they must hold it.'[115] Britain had used all the means at its disposal to achieve its purpose. It cared very little for the future implications of its policy for its aims were focused on more immediate goals. Many of these implications were to become apparent as early as 1813 and some of them, as will be seen in subsequent Chapters, were to continue to influence or condition developments in the Maltese public service for quite some time to come.

First, there was the question of the size of the Maltese public service itself. The number of those employed in its ranks had been allowed to grow uncontrolled and by 1812 in terms of salaries alone the service accounted for more than a quarter of all public expenditure.[116] In the years to come, especially in times of severe economic crisis, several attempts were to be made by the Colonial Office to reduce this burden on the local revenue. But these were only to be partially successful for Governors in Malta at such times were under enormous pressure to adopt similar measures to those adopted by Ball when faced with similar circumstances.[117] The Maltese at this time were certainly not opposed, or at least concerned with the size of their public service. They paid no direct taxes for its upkeep for as we shall see in the following Chapter

until 1822 the revenue of the government was acquired mainly from tariffs on commerce and from public property.[118]

Furthermore, every class of Maltese society looked to the government for the provision of a particular social service, whether this was education, medical care, charity, and the provision of grain or work during periods of severe unemployment. The tendency, therefore, was always towards bulky bureaucratic structures. What worried many Maltese was not the size of the bureaucracy but the influence that bureaucrats may enjoy over the decision making process. This is why, as Ball had noted, Maltese opposed the combination of civil and military affairs under the direction of the garrison commander. It was their view that military governors, burdened as they were with military duties, could not give proper attention to civil affairs with the result that they were forced to delegate too much power to public servants, who in turn, sought their own interests rather than those of the population as a whole.[119] As we shall see from Chapter Five onwards, the dangers of bureaucratic government were to be raised by nearly every new generation of Maltese leaders in their struggle for representative government. As a consequence, the activities of public servants in Malta were to become permanently entangled with political issues.

The question of bureaucratic size was closely connected with a second implication. British policy had led the Maltese to believe that British rule was synonymous with paternal government. This promise had featured in public proclamations by Civil Commissioners and had been backed in practice by the infusion of several hundred thousand pounds of British taxpayers money. British notions of government were, however, decidedly opposed to such practices and British departure from its own principles was justifiable only by the need to gain advantage in Malta. By 1812, with its objective secured and Malta enjoying unprecedented commercial prosperity, British enthusiasm for paternal government in Malta began to wane. The

Maltese were no longer to look to Britain in times of crisis or for the prosperity of their country but to their own industry and energies. Rather, the Maltese were expected to shoulder not only the burden of their institutions but also that arising from the defence of their island.[120]

We shall see, in the next two Chapters, this new attitude being put to the test for, in 1813, as a result of a plague epidemic, Malta's status as one of the 'most flourishing of His Majesty's possessions' was wiped out.[121] Without commerce neither employment nor revenue were possible and within a few short months the island had descended into a state of near bankruptcy. Nonetheless, Britain was to remain steadfast in its new attitude towards Malta and in the next few years efforts were to be made to curb some of the existing paternalistic structures.

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45. Cameron to Sec. of State, 15 Nov. 1801, C.O.158/2, PRO, Kew, London.
46. Major Pigot was the British commanding officer to whom the French had surrendered Valletta in September 1800. He vied with Ball for the office of Head of Government but was very unpopular with the Maltese for having excluded them from the capitulation signing and for allowing the French to leave and take a great part of the spoils which they had taken from the Maltese with them.
47. A.V. Laferla, (1946), op.cit., Vol.I, p.9.
48. Ibid., p.14.
49. W. Hardman, op.cit., p.359.
50. Ball to Dundas, 6 Mar. 1801, C.O.158/2, PRO, Kew, London.
51. Ball to Dundas, 24 Jan. 1801, C.O.158/1, PRO, Kew, London; Ball to Dundas, 6 Mar. 1801, C.O.158/1, PRO, Kew, London; and Hobart to Cameron, 14 May 1801, C.O.158/1, PRO, Kew, London.
52. Hobart to Cameron, 14 May 1801 and Hobart to Cameron, 21 May 1801, C.O.158/1, PRO, Kew, London.
53. Hobart to Cameron, Instructions, 14 May 1801, C.O.158/1, PRO, Kew, London.
54. Ibid.; unless indicated quotes not referenced are from Hobart's Instructions to Cameron.
55. Report on the Revenue of Malta, with some observations, 26 Dec. 1801, unsigned but generally attributed to Ball. See W. Hardman, op.cit., p.552.

56. Hobart to Cameron, Instructions, 14 May 1801, C.O.158/1, PRO, Kew, London.
57. Eton to Sullivan, 5 Jul. 1801, C.O.158/4, PRO, Kew, London.
58. Cameron, Civil Commissioner, to the Maltese, Proclamation, 15 Jul. 1801, Collezione di Bandi, (1840), Govt. Printing Press, Valletta, p.67.
59. W. Hardman, op.cit., p.402.
60. A.V. Laferla, (1946), op.cit., Vol.I, pp.26-28.
61. Ibid., see Articles 3, 4 & 5.
62. Department of Information, (1968), Malta in Brief, "Declaration of Rights of the Inhabitants of the Islands of Malta and Gozo", 1802, pp.11-3.
63. Macaulay to Ball, 26 Apr. 1802, in Hardman, op.cit., p.437; also Ball to Hobart, 7 Feb. 1803, Libr.Mss.530, National Library, Valletta, Malta.
64. Hobart to Ball, "Most Secret", 17 Oct. 1802, C.O.158/4, PRO, London.
65. A.V. Laferla, (1946), op.cit., Vol.I, pp.29-30.
66. W. Hardman, op.cit., p.450.
67. Ibid., p.1.
68. Ballard, op.cit., pp.129-30.
69. B.E. Rooke, op.cit., p.569.
70. Hobart to Cameron, 20 May 1801, C.O.158/1, PRO, Kew, London.
71. Hobart to Cameron, Instructions, 14 May 1801 and 20 May 1801, C.O.158/1, PRO, Kew, London.
72. Ibid.
73. This practice of opening all letters coming into Malta continued until 1845 when Lord Stanley, the Sec. of State for War and the Colonies, finally put a stop to it. It was Joseph Hume, the radical MP who brought the affair to the notice of the Sec. of State after two letters addressed to him from Mr Gibbons, his son-in-law, and another which was enclosed, addressed to the Duchess of St Albans, were opened at the Lazzaretto in Malta. Hume to Maberly, 28 Feb. 1845; Maberly to Hume, 28 Feb. 1845; and Stanley to Hume, 7 Mar. 1845, C.O.158/133, PRO, Kew, London.
74. Laing to Henry Casolani, in The Casolani Papers, MS.1092, National Library, Malta.
75. Ball to Mallet, 3 Aug. 1808; Ball to Mallet, 30 Nov. 1807; and Ball to Cooke, 30 Nov. 1807, in Letters of Ball to various Secretaries of State for the Colonies, Libr.Mss.530, National Library, Valletta.
76. Ball to Mallet, 30 Nov. 1807 and Ball to Cooke, 30 Nov. 1801, Letters..., op.cit., Libr.Mss.530, National Library, Valletta.
77. A.E. Abela, (1988), The Order of St Michael and St George in Malta, Progress Press, Valletta, p.76.

78. E.A. Benians et. al., op.cit., Vol.II, pp.115-6.
79. Ball to Granville, 30 Jan. 1805, C.O.159/2, PRO, Kew, London; William England Papers, Doc.XI, RML Bibl.Mss.1255.
80. Maitland to Bathurst, 17 Aug. 1814, C.O.158/39, and Hankey to Wilmot-Horton, 29 Sept. 1824, C.O.158/36, PRO, Kew, London.
81. Report of the Royal Commission of 1812, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London.
82. See Appendices, Report of the Royal Commission of 1812, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London.
83. William England Papers, Doc.XI, MSS. RML Bibl.Mss.1255, National Library, Valletta, Malta; see also, William Thornton, (1836), Memoire on the Finances of Malta, Govt. Printing Press, Valletta.
84. Rooke, op.cit., Vol.I, p.555.
85. E. Blaquirie, op.cit., p.377.
86. E.A. Benians et. al., op.cit., Vol.II, p.178.
87. Ibid., p.178.
88. Ibid., p.178.
89. Report of the Royal Commission of 1812, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London.
90. Report of the Royal Commission of 1812, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid.
93. Report of the Royal Commission of 1812, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London.
94. Report of the Royal Commission of 1812, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London.
95. S. Laspina, (1971), op.cit., p.258.
96. Once again with the appointment of Oakes, a military officer of high rank, Britain betrayed its intention to subject civil affairs to strategic interests.
97. Maltese Petition of 1811, C.O.158/17, PRO, Kew, London.
98. Ibid.
99. Ibid.
100. Blaquiére, op.cit., Vol.II, p.335.
101. Liverpool to the Commission of Inquiry, Instructions, 1 May 1812, C.O.159/4, PRO, Kew, London.
102. William Mark, At Sea with Nelson, p.125, quoted in A.V. Laferla, (1946), op.cit., Vol.I, p.48.

103. William Thornton, op.cit., p.8.
104. Ball to Mallet, 3 Aug. 1808, Letters of Ball to various Secretaries of State for the Colonies, Libr.Mss.530, National Library, Valletta.
105. See Notes 41 to 45 above.
106. Cameron to Hobart, Private and Confidential, 15 Nov. 1801, encl. A List of Persons Employed Under the Government and their Salaries, C.O.158/2, PRO, Kew, London.
107. Report of the Royal Commission of 1812, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London.
108. Ball to Hobart, 15 Nov. 1803, Letters of Ball to various Secretaries of State for the Colonies, Libr.Mss.530, National Library, Valletta.
109. Ibid.
110. Maltese Petition of 1811, C.O.158/17, PRO, Kew, London; and also Report of the Royal Commission of 1812, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London.
111. Report of the Royal Commission of 1812, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London.
112. Ibid., also some the following quotes.
113. A.V. Laferla, op.cit., Vol.I, p.84.
114. Report of the Royal Commission of 1812, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London.
115. C.R. Fay, (1934), Imperial Economy and its Place in the Formation of Economic Doctrine, 1600-1932, Clarendon Press, Oxford, p.22.
116. This figure is arrived at by computing the salaries of all public officers listed in the Appendices to the Report of the Commission of 1812.
117. The history of the public service in Malta provides a tale of failed attempts at economies. Promises by Governors to reduce offices were hardly worth the paper they were written on. Today, under responsible government the picture remains very much the same with 45% of all those gainfully occupied being dependent on the Government for their livelihood.
118. The Commission of 1812 reported that 'the Maltese are not accustomed to the payment of taxes' and urged that no new taxes should be imposed.
119. Ball to Dundas, 24 Jan. 1801 and Ball to Dundas, 6 Mar. 1801, both in C.O.158/1, PRO, Kew, London.
120. From this period onwards any surpluses accruing to the Maltese Government in any given year were to be transferred to the Military Chest as part of the Island's contribution towards its defence.
121. Liverpool to Commissioners of Inquiry, Instructions, 1 May 1812, C.O.159/4, PRO, Kew, London.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE REFORM OF MALTESE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: 1812-1824

If the year 1800 had marked the beginning of an inexorable process of British annexation of Malta, the year 1812 may be considered as the year in which that process was, for all intents and purposes, terminated. Malta, it is true, was not formally ceded to Britain by the other powers until the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1814, but this event amounted to nothing more than the affixing of a formal seal of approval to a 'de facto' situation.[1] In fact, by the first half of 1812, the strands of a new process were already evident from the instructions to the Commission of Inquiry of 1812 which was directed to examine British proposals for a settled system of government in Malta and to make recommendations calculated to reform its administration. The intended outcome of this new process was the formal institutionalisation of British authority in Malta. A discussion of the effective implementation of this process will provide the main thrust of this Chapter.

As a process the institutionalisation of British rule in Malta may be said to have involved three strands. The first concerned the system of government to be adopted in Malta. Primarily, British intentions were to make government in Malta coincide with British strategic interests. The second referred to the necessity of reforming Maltese public administration in order to raise it from the extremely inefficient state in which it had fallen. The third strand involved the transfer of all administrative and fiscal authority from Maltese public servants to British office-holders. None of these strands was independent of the others and their separate treatment below has been adopted to allow for systematic analysis.

The man appointed to carry this process into effect was Thomas Maitland, a military officer who had distinguished himself in the war with France and who, as Governor of Ceylon, had acquired the reputation of a

capable, if somewhat excessively autocratic, governor.[2] In July 1813 he was appointed to succeed Hildebrand Oakes in Malta but with the title of Governor instead of that of Civil Commissioner.[3] This departure from past practice was a further confirmation of the new process then in progress. It was intended to convey to the other powers

'that Malta was a possession of His [British] Majesty, totally independent in all its relations of the Crown of Sicily and of every other foreign power.'[4]

#### THE MAKING OF A COLONY

In his instructions to the Commission of Inquiry of 1812, Lord Liverpool, the British Prime Minister, had stressed the need for the Commissioners to keep constantly before them that Malta was a strategic 'military post of primary importance'.[5] It was considered desirable, unless serious objections existed against it, that in Malta, 'the supreme power both civil and military should be vested...in the same person', i.e. a military officer of sufficient rank, 'in order to ensure the greatest unity, simplicity and efficacy...' This meant that the grant of a representative assembly, as demanded by the local aristocracy, was unacceptable to Britain. The British government was also of the view that the powers of the civil courts should be somehow limited 'in order to prevent their clashing with the military authorities in any way...' In Brief, the leading principles by which the views of the British government were guided and to which the Commission of Inquiry was expected to adhere, were

'to give to the Maltese, and to all residents in Malta, as large a share of civil liberty as is consistent with the military circumstances of the island.'[6]

The Commissioners needed no further urgings on this point. They were agreed that the Maltese were singularly unfit to enjoy any portion of political power and the grant of a representative assembly would be, in their view, 'a measure fraught with the greatest danger and involving the most ruinous consequences.'[7]

Nor did the Commission of 1812 raise any objection against a system of government which vested civil and military authority in the hands of a military officer and in 1813 began a process whereby those appointed as governors were also vested, almost unexceptionably, with the office of Commander-in-Chief of all land forces.[8] Lennox Mills has argued that

'the union of the position of Governor...with that of the immediate command of the troops was very unusual.'[9]

But Malta had been acquired by Britain because of its strategic military importance and as Fieldhouse has observed, the purposes for which a colony is acquired tends to determine both its functions and its character.[10]

The Commissioners, concluded, therefore, that:

'To graduate our ideas of a perfection of Government by the approximation it bears towards our own is a mode of reasoning as unjust as it is erroneous.'[11]

This conclusion was not novel but reflected current British thinking and practice on colonial government. In the past it had been the practice of the British government to grant colonies some form of representative government. But in 1774 a departure was made in the case of Quebec when it was asserted that 'an English Constitution and English laws were unsuited to a colony of Frenchmen'.[12] The Quebec Act of 1774, therefore, concentrated power in the hands of the governor but withheld the grant of a representative assembly. Instead it allowed for the creation of a nominated advisory Council which included in its composition senior heads of departments.[13] From this time onwards, certainly in the non-settlement colonies, the pattern of government to be found was mainly gubernatorial in character rather than representative.[14]

Despite some differences between one colony and another, two features of the new system were common to all of these colonies. First, in each of these colonies, which eventually became known collectively as the "Crown Colonies", the Crown retained a power of legislating by Order-in-Council.[15] This method of legislation allowed Britain to intervene directly, whenever it was deemed necessary, in the affairs of



these colonies.

Second, in these colonies government generally meant personal rule by the Governor.[16] Colonial governors in crown colonies were by their Commissions vested with extensive powers, even quasi-absolute powers. Very few governors, however, ever managed to exercise these powers to the full. The most important check on governors tended to come from their own officials in the colonies, although very often this check was not always for the right motives.[17] Indeed, it was not unusual to find that in some colonies relations between the governor and his advisers were perpetually strained if not outrightly hostile. Howe, in Canada, had compared the governor to a snared bird; he

'may flutter and struggle...[but] at last [he must] resign himself to his fate...and be content with the narrow limits assigned to him by his keepers.'[18]

By contrast, Thomas Maitland was a governor who exercised his powers to the full. In both Ceylon and Malta he kept a firm hold over his subordinates, and those who failed to carry out his instructions to the letter he either humiliated or removed from their office.[19] He was also quite prepared to resist Colonial Office instructions with which he personally disagreed.[20] But in crown colonies bureaucratic control over government policies tended to be the norm rather than the exception. Indeed, students of British colonial government tend to agree that the practical essence of crown colony government was its bureaucratic nature.[21] In the case of Malta its growth was to become steadily more pronounced after Maitland's death in 1824.

A second, theoretically more powerful check on the governor, was that provided by Colonial Office supervision. Very often the only safeguard enjoyed by colonial subjects against misrule lay in an appeal to London. Although colonial officials in London generally did their best to ensure good government in the colonies, in the first decades of the nineteenth century very little attention was given to colonial affairs. Colonies were

to a great extent simply a bore.[22] In this too, however, bureaucratic influence in the colonies tended to provide the greatest obstacle to Colonial Office supervision. This was largely due to the fact that London was, in no small measure, dependent on officers in the colonies for the bulk of its information. There were to be occasions when, in order to get to the bottom of things in Malta and elsewhere, London was forced to have recourse to special Commissions of Inquiry.

Crown colony government was introduced in Malta in 1813, but, because of its fortress character, Malta was not included in their list nor was it, until 1851, referred to by this designation. Instead, in 1813 it was placed under the supervision of General Bunbury at the War Office which at the time came under the responsibility of the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies.[23]

Lord Bathurst, the Colonial Secretary, in his instructions to Maitland, laid down that the latter's authority in Malta was not to be shackled by any person or body, but was to be limited only by orders from London.[24] Maitland was said to be a 'rough old despot', 'an ape of Napoleon', and someone who would have 'constituted a capital governor over a colony of convicts.'[25] A study of his colonial administration concluded that Maitland only 'liked subordinates who were capable of nothing but taking orders from himself.'[26] As governor he kept the reins of government totally in his hands and hardly anything could be done or a shilling spent without his sanction or knowledge. Neither did he approve of appeals to London. During his term in Malta he successfully managed to block, as late as 1821, all Maltese efforts to present their case to the Colonial Office. Maitland argued that to allow such appeals was neither in the interest of the Home government nor of the local administration for 'it would place it [former] in a situation of much difficulty but it would effectually ruin the whole power and authority of the local government.'[27]

As first British governor of Malta, however, the task of reforming

Maltese public administration devolved on him. Aware of his autocratic nature Lord Bathurst, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, sought by his instructions to restrain Maitland.[28] He urged him to make only those changes which appeared to him best calculated to strengthen British authority in Malta, but which also encouraged a better administration of justice and the revenue, and which served to stimulate commerce. He reminded Maitland that 'the first introduction of British [non-paternalistic] principles might occasion to one or other of the classes of [Maltese] society' quite a shock since some still hoped that Britain would grant them a share in political power.[29] The Report of the Commission of Inquiry of 1812 was never published and the Maltese could only speculate as to its recommendations.[30]

Maitland arrived in Malta in October 1813 when the plague was still raging in the islands. The malady had virtually wiped out the commerce of the island and, the Maltese population, almost at a stroke, had found itself once again plunged into poverty.[31] But little could be done until the plague had been brought under control and it was not until January 1814 that Maitland was able to turn his attention to the reform of the administration.

#### THE REFORM OF MALTESE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The Commission of Inquiry of 1812 had taken only two months to complete its wide-ranging investigations, but its Report contained several recommendations with regard to the Maltese public service as well as the first nearly complete list of its personnel.[32] Several of these recommendations were adopted by the Colonial Office and Maitland was instructed to carry them through. But, as so often happens at the implementation stage of the policy process, some of these reforms were eventually modified by the way Maitland implemented them. To some extent the framework in which reform was actually carried out resembled very much that which Maitland had adopted in Ceylon. His reform there had a twofold

character: it was intended to extend and consolidate his own personal authority over every act and every branch of the administration, and to ensure the efficient collection of the revenue.[33] In Malta Maitland added a third, i.e., that of making the administration, in his own words, "English".[34]

Maitland's reform of Maltese public administration took him almost the whole period of his governorship before being fully completed. In several letters to the Secretary of State and to General Bunbury, he often complained that, in the case of some public institutions, such as the Università and the hospitals, what he alleged as the 'invetrate prejudices of the natives' forced him to proceed slowly and with a degree of caution.[35] Thus, Maitland's reform of Maltese public administration may be said to have had two phases. The first related to what may be termed the "proper" establishments of government, that is those responsible for law and order, and the collection of the revenue. The second phase, which proved to be much longer than the first, was concerned with the reform of the Università and the other social institutions which Maitland designated as "the Charitable Establishments".[36]

As in Ceylon, one of Maitland's first measures was intended to stamp his authority over the entire administration of the island. In a minute dated January 1814 addressed to all public establishments, the governor decreed that as from that date every establishment must, before undertaking any measure, submit its intentions in writing for the approval of the head of government.[37] 'It is to be clearly understood', stressed the minute, that verbal acquiescence to a proposition did not in any way constitute approval for a measure until it had been formally sanctioned in writing by a warrant bearing the Governor's signature. Further, all correspondence by or between government establishments was to be conducted through the Chief Secretary's office, which was situated in the Governor's residence. Copies of all the records of the administration were also to be housed there. The

office of the Chief Secretary was constituted by Lord Bathurst in 1813 in place of that of Public Secretary occupied, at the time, by the Rev Laing who had succeeded to it in 1807 after having served in the civil Commissioner's Secretariat since at least 1801.[38] Laing was appointed to the new office while two new appointees, Rodwell Wright and Jarvis, were appointed by Bathurst to the new offices of Chief Justice and King's Assessor respectively.[39]

The immediate effect of this minute was to bring under Maitland's own personal scrutiny or direction the revenue and expenditure of the colony and nearly every item of correspondence emanating or received by every public establishment. Another was to deprive public servants of virtually every element of administrative discretion that they had come to enjoy. Fully in command of the administration Maitland now turned his attention to its reform, the Courts providing his first target.

The Commission of 1812 had concluded that the judicial establishments at Malta were characterised by widespread corruption and excessive delays in the hearing of cases. In its view judicial procedure represented one of the greatest mischiefs under which Maltese society laboured.[40] These evils 'had arisen from the Judge's incomes depending on casual fees.' and their remedy, consequently, lay in the

'...necessity of placing the Judges themselves on a more respectable and independent footing' and 'beyond partiality.'[41]

The Commission recommended, therefore, that in future Judges should be paid fixed salaries instead of fees. Their independence from the executive was to be secured by the discontinuation of the "scrutiny" and by the abolition of the Segnatura. In the first instance they recommended that the head of government should be deprived of the ancient power of dismissing Judges and that this power be vested in the King-in-Council. Proven misconduct was at all times to be the basis for dismissal of Judges. In the second case the Commission recommended that no public body was to exercise any influence or have the power to overturn judgements of the Courts, although the Governor

was to be vested with the right of mitigation or of pardon in criminal cases.

Maitland consented to the view that Judges should be paid fixed salaries instead of fees. Indeed, he held this to be applicable to the rest of the public service.[42] He also welcomed the suggestion that the Segnatura should be abolished. According to the Governor the great number of memorials and petitions presented at the weekly 'audienza' served no purpose other than 'to oppress and clog the wheels of government.'[43] But Maitland, despite declarations to the contrary, was firmly opposed to the idea that Judges should be independent of the executive. He feared that an independent judiciary would set itself up as a rival focus of power to his own, capable of embarrassing his administration by a contrasting interpretation of the law from that of his own. It was his view that the authority of the Governor should at all times be supreme. Indeed Maitland held that it was

'the part of the loyal judicial officer to see that the authority of the government is unchallenged'

so that there can be no doubt as to who was the real head of the government.[44] This meant, in Maitland's terms, that

'no Judge can ever be permitted to claim or exercise a right to give any opinion in his court as a Judge, of the fitness or unfitness of the law of the land; it is his duty merely to execute that law be it good, bad or indifferent...[and], if repugnant to his feelings to resign his situation'.[45]

These maxims were conveyed to members of the Maltese judiciary by the Governor in an address in January 1815.

Maitland was adamant on this point and, even before he had formally taken up his appointment as Governor, he had requested and obtained permission from the Secretary of State to establish in Malta a Supreme Council of Justice with himself as President.[46] The other members of the Supreme Council were to be the Chief Justice and the Chief Secretary, both British, and two Maltese judges, thereby ensuring a British majority on the Council. This Court was to function as an extraordinary appellate court

reviewing, however, only those decisions of the other courts from which an appeal to the Supreme Council had been granted "ex gratia" by the Governor after petition.[47] This placed in the hands of the Governor a discretionary power which he could use whenever he wished to exert his authority over the judiciary or for his own ends. The result, as Harrison Smith has pointed out, was that in a sense the function and concept of the Segnatura was somewhat restored.[48] Soon after this Court began functioning Maitland boasted to Lord Bathurst that in every case that had been allowed to come before the Supreme Council, without exception, the decision of the inferior court had been reversed.[49] But, as Laferla, a Maltese anglophile historian has concluded, this situation

'left much to be desired both on account of an inexplicable partiality and of its being converted into a means of revenge'.[50]

The rest of Maitland's judicial reforms were more or less inspired by the recommendations of the Commission of 1812. Thus, the Supreme Tribunal of Appeal was transformed into the High Court of Appeal with the President of the Courts and two other judges as members. New courts having a criminal and civil jurisdiction replaced the ancient courts, while the Courts at Mdina and in the island of Gozo were abolished. A new Commercial Court was set up as were also two new courts of inferior jurisdiction, i.e., the Court of Executive Police and the Court of Judicial Police.[51]

The Governor, however, despite their marginality and the saving that might have accrued to government, retained the offices of "Luogotenenti" or town and village magistrates, because they offered some political advantage. It was seen in the previous Chapter that of those groups which were unhappy with British rule the local aristocracy was the most vocal. Maitland was determined to put an end to their agitation and secure their loyalty for his administration by the offer of small offices. He divided Malta into six districts and appointed to each district a member of the local nobility to act as Lord Lieutenant, arguing that those holding the offices of Luogotenenti at the time were 'not of that class and order of

society which ought to represent the Government in the various casals [villages].'[52] These offices were, however, nothing less than sinecures for the former Luogotenenti were to continue to enjoy their salaries and powers but with the title of Deputies to the Lord Lieutenants.[53] Thus, the system which had began in Ball's time of creating or giving small offices to Maltese for political advantage was destined to continue even at a time when the emphasis with regard to the Maltese public service was on reform.

The Commission of 1812 had also found a great deal to criticise with regard to the collection of the revenue and the methods of accounting used in the island. It condemned the fact that most financial transactions were carried out with little or no supervision and frequently large expenditure was incurred without any authority except that of public servants.[54] Maitland concurred fully with this view arguing that as things stood it was virtually impossible that

'the accounts of this island could ever be examined or looked into with the accuracy common to all other parts of His Majesty's Dominions.'[55]

The remedy lay in the creation of a centralised and efficient system of public accounting, like the one he had established in Ceylon. This system, which had 'met with the complete approbation of His Majesty's Government', had three principal features.[56] First, the collectors of revenue were to have absolutely no authority or control over its spending, revenue collected by Government was to go into the public Treasury. If expenditure was deemed necessary the written approval of the Governor had to be secured. The procedure to be followed was that as laid down in the minute of January 1814. Second, no money whatsoever could 'be issued from the public Treasury except by a warrant' under Maitland's own signature, and finally, that all accounts were to be closed and audited monthly.[57]

Maitland provided for the effective implementation of this system by the introduction of two new measures. The first was concerned with the auditing of government accounts. Until 1814 public accounts were audited



annually by James Toole, a member of the Services Commissariat Auditing Board in Malta.[58] Maitland's system, however, requiring that all accounts should be audited monthly, rendered this arrangement inadequate and he replaced it with a new Audit Office. James Toole was appointed its first head, but he was soon replaced by William Thornton, a nominee of Maitland.[59] Although initially the effectiveness of this office was hampered by lack of staff, the Auditor having only two clerks to assist him, its contribution towards the improvement of the government revenue was quite marked.[60]

Maitland's second measure was directed at the existing system of remuneration of public employees. He, like many of his contemporaries in Britain, disapproved of the existing system whereby almost all government employees were paid by fees. This in his view prevented proper supervision of the collection of the revenue and consequently allowed for abuse.[61] He further argued that the tendency for abuse was reinforced by the excessively low fees received by public servants.[62] This, partly explained the issue, raised by the Commission of 1812, of widespread corruption by public servants. Maitland stressed that prevailing conditions made it utterly impossible for either the revenue or the expenditure of the government to be fully or fairly collected or accounted for. Therefore, 'with a view to economy in the strictest sense of the word', the Governor abolished all fees and replaced them, as in the case of the Judges, with fixed salaries which he also raised.[63] This reform served to consolidate government revenue for, from this period onwards, all revenue or fees earned by public establishments were no longer retained by them but were placed directly in the account of the Government Treasury.

The revenue of the government was derived from two principal sources, i.e. that earned from general mercantile activity and income from rents. The mercantile revenue consisted mainly of earnings from customs, excise duties, quarantine dues, port fees, auction fees, and from Mediterranean

Passes and shipping licences. By 1812 mercantile revenue made up nearly half the total revenue of the government.[64] The plague in 1813 and Napoleon's defeat in 1814, however, had dealt this source of the revenue a severe blow. The former had resulted in an embargo against Maltese shipping while the latter had removed the necessity for non-British shipping to obtain a pass or licence from Malta in order to trade freely in the Mediterranean. Income from such passes and from auction fees became, therefore, almost negligible.[65] Even so, Maitland was still convinced in 1814 that it was

'to this source [mercantile revenue][that] we must at all times look for our greatest receipt.'[66]

The bulk of the mercantile revenue of Malta came from customs and excise duties. To ensure that these duties were 'collected with assiduity', Maitland divided the Customs Department into two branches, one responsible for imports and an other for exports. Excise duties mainly on wine, equalled, and at times surpassed in amount, the income from customs. The main reason for this had been the large influx of British troops stationed in Malta.[67] The Customs Department he placed under a new officer, Francis Muller, who like his predecessor was British.[68] The Office of Collector of Excise remained, however, under Maltese management.[69] The customs revenue Maitland consolidated by raising the 'ad valorem' duty on imports by a quarter percent to one percent and, by 1814, he was able to report that, despite all the difficulties, customs revenue had risen above that of 1812.[70]

The Quarantine establishment was next in importance to the Customs and Excise Departments in the contribution it made to the revenue, contributing nearly one-quarter of all government revenue. Maitland rightly called it 'the most important Department in this island',[71] for as the plague had painfully demonstrated the health and economic prosperity of the population were intimately connected. The revenue earned from quarantine, though important, was ultimately of secondary consideration. But this

establishment had been shamefully neglected over the years. Of the two British officers who had occupied the office of Quarantine Superintendent, none had spent more than a year of residence in Malta. William Eton, appointed in the middle of 1801 had left Malta by March 1802 as a consequence of his support and involvement with the local movement for the restoration of the Consiglio Popolare. He remained in London until his dismissal by Oakes in 1811.[72] He was replaced by William Pym whose duties in Gibraltar, however, prevented him from attending to those in Malta.[73] The result was that this office had become no more than a sinecure, its responsibilities

'jobbed away by the holder...to some deputy selected not for his fitness but for the cheapness for which he would undertake to do the duties of his principal.'[74]

It was held that abuses by quarantine employees were directly responsible for the introduction of the plague into Malta.[75]

Two things were required, according to the Governor, if the establishment was to properly carry out the purposes for which it existed. First, that a person experienced in quarantine matters be appointed as its head. Although Bathurst had appointed a new resident Superintendant of Quarantine, Maitland did not approve of this appointment and admitted that he was endeavouring to entice to Malta the Quarantine Master of the port of Leghorn.[76] Second, that employees of this establishment be well paid, had every reasonable opportunity for promotion from the lower to the higher offices of the department, and ultimately have a right to a retirement pension in their old age.[77] An increase in the salaries of employees was, however, the only measure implemented by Maitland, although it must be said that this increase was not exceptional and formed part of the general increase in salary granted to other public servants.[78]

But Maitland also divested this establishment from those responsibilities which did not properly belong to it. It was, for example, relieved of all duties with regard to shipping activities in the Grand

Harbour, which included the safe conduct of ships into the harbour. These duties he transferred to a new department, the Marine Police Department whose newly appointed head, Robert Corner, was also designated Captain of the Great Port. After 1817 Corner's responsibilities were extended to include those of sitting Magistrate of the Ports.[79] Matters connected with quarantine were placed outside his jurisdiction and from 1814 onwards quarantined vessels were restricted to Marsamxett harbour on the west side of Valletta. With a lazaretto already operating in this harbour its designation as a quarantine harbour seemed a logical step. Maitland also laid down strict quarantine regulations.[80]

Revenue from government owned property in the form of rents formed the second most important source of revenue after that from mercantile activities. Ball had entrusted its collection to a Board composed of four Maltese administrators.[81] The Commission of 1812 had been very critical of the way this Board had managed the finances of this department. It had recommended, therefore, the abolition of this board, a suggestion which received the approval of Bathurst, the Colonial Secretary.[82] Maitland claimed to have

'found the whole system to be so radically defective, and the mode of administering that system so perfectly vicious'

that he was convinced that the establishment would not admit of any reform and required to be remodelled from scratch.[83]

The Governor's minute of January 1814, had, as a start, curbed every vestige of independence that this Board, like other establishments, had hitherto enjoyed over the disposal of its revenue. In August 1814, however, Maitland went a step further and suppressed the Board for the "Administration of Public Property" completely. He gave the 'amministratori' three months in which to settle and close the accounts of the old establishment.[84] In its place he created the Land Revenue Department which, however, was to have exactly the same responsibilities as its predecessor, placing at its head two British public officers, Hector

Grieg as Collector of HM Land Revenue, and John Mackenzie as Deputy Collector.[85] Maitland also took care, something which even the Commission of 1812 had failed to do, to identify and place on the regular establishment those skilled and unskilled employees who, though scattered throughout the islands, were employed on a fixed basis with this establishment.[86] Not long after the Land Revenue Department came into being the Governor pronounced his reform a success. 'The practical result has been', he informed Bathurst, 'that the whole expense upon this head' per month, 'does not amount to what it formerly was per week.'[87] One reason for this was that the rents due to government were now being collected efficiently and were regularly accounted for. Another was that no expenditure could be incurred without Maitland's approval.

Having dealt with the "proper" departments of government, in 1815 Maitland turned his attention to the remaining departments' which consisted of the charities, the Università and the University of Studies. On first taking up his appointment in Malta, Maitland had been disturbed by the scale and tasks of the administration. He still held to the view that law and order, the efficient collection of the revenue, and the security of the colony were the tasks that ought to concern government. 'The best symptom of any government when it is once regulated', he wrote, 'is when the executive authority has least to do - and when it is perfectly dormant.'[88] It was a view, however, which did not truly reflect the situation in Malta. As Willis Dixon has observed, in Malta the Head of Government 'was also a business manager'. He was, 'in fact, responsible for every aspect of the life of his colony.'[89] It was a role that had been performed by the Knights of St John and which British policy in Malta between 1800 and 1812, aiming as it did at securing Maltese support for British rule, had revived and sustained. Neither was an early departure from this system likely. In 1813, Lord Bathurst instructed Maitland that the necessity of 'identifying...[Maltese] affections and interest with the

British connection' still remained.[90]

Maitland's declared policy with regard to each of these institutions was to 'reduce them to be less expensive', and to make them 'fulfil their intended purposes better than they do at present'.[91] But in so doing Maitland changed their character completely, transforming them from semi-autonomous bodies into government departments. As was demonstrated in previous chapters, with the exception of the civil hospital, most of these establishments enjoyed a semi-autonomous status. Although administered by government appointed Boards and subject to scrutiny by the local Treasury, a good portion of their funds were derived from voluntary contributions and bequests.[92] Maitland, however, put an end to this system assuming, on behalf of the colonial government, full responsibility for every aspect of their administration. Their funds and burdens he incorporated in the local government budget while their property he placed in the charge of the Collector of Land Revenue.[93]

The "Charitable Institutions", as the charities became known from this period onwards, consisted mainly of two hospitals in Valletta, one for males and another for females, a hospital at Mdina and one in Gozo, the Ospizio, the foundling hospital, the Grand Almoner, and the Monte di Pieta'. Maitland found the hospitals in a condition which not only

'defeated the objects of the Institution, but which made even a Charitable Establishment degrading to the government and disgraceful to the people.'[94]

Apart from being filthy they served only to increase the dependence of the people on the government. Many of those who made use of the institutions were neither sick nor destitute and the number of those employed with them was

'infinitely greater than what is absolutely requisite, or what is to be found in any of the charities of surrounding nations.'[95]

It was his view, however, that reform would not be possible until he had wrestled control of these institutions from Maltese hands. In 1815 Maitland suppressed these various Boards substituting them with a Committee

of the Charitable Institutions. The members of this Committee consisted of Maitland as Patron and President, several British heads of departments as Vice-Presidents and the Maltese Physician-in-Chief. Their day-to-day management was delegated to a newly established Permanent Committee of the Charitable Institutions consisting of, two Englishmen; the Rev Howe le Mesurier and Robert Grieves, and two Maltese; Canon Saverio Caruana, rector of the University of Studies and a Dr Caruana.[96]

The task of the Permanent Committee was fourfold. To ensure cleanliness and hygiene in these institutions. To improve the diet of the patients while seeing that all the accounts were properly kept. To ensure that those admitted were truly destitute or in need of treatment, thereby putting an end to the system whereby 'the idle and the profligate were living at the expense of government'.[97] And finally, the Permanent Committee was to enforce discipline among the employees, the patients and their relatives.[98]

Maitland envisaged that a reduction in the large number of persons employed with these institutions would serve to further lessen the existing dependence of all classes of the population on the government. The government, he wrote,

'neither can nor will grant salaries to those who may not be necessary and who have been led to suppose from long habit, that once employed by Government...it is the duty of Government to support them and their children through life.'[99]

This, in his view applied equally to members of the professions. He stressed that

'...The learned professions must learn, and must be taught to feel, that it is not to Government, they are ever to look for support and assistance...but that the true support and independence they must look for is in their own talents, their own character and their own industry.'[100]

But in the difficult economic condition to be found in Malta at the time these sentiments appeared inappropriate. In the countryside the spinners and the weavers had little work. The cotton industry had remained in a severe state of slump and, after 1817, because of cheaper Egyptian

cotton, the situation became even worse.[101] Work was also scarce around the harbours of Valletta and the island did not possess sufficient capital by which new commercial activities could be promoted.[102] Even the government, which had been forced to borrow huge sums from Britain, entertained little prospect of paying them back.[103] But even so, if any action at all was possible to relieve, even marginally, the economic plight of the population, then the government was best placed to carry it into effect and it was from this quarter that the Maltese population looked for relief.

In 1817, forced to retreat from his earlier position, Maitland established two government-financed and administered cotton factories, one in Valletta and the other in Gozo.[104] These factories were intended to provide employment for women and although they never achieved a profit they succeeded in their aim of reducing distress among the urban poor and of keeping poor women from the streets. But overall, they failed to have much impact on the general condition of the people, especially in the countryside.[105] Yet this measure, probably unique to Malta, strongly emphasised how difficult it was for government to reconcile liberal intentions with actual practice.

This factor was equally relevant, if not more so, in the case of the Università or government administered grain monopoly. Initially, Maitland, was against the government being responsible for this establishment. 'I do not' he wrote to Bathurst in August 1814, 'understand Government being a merchant.' [106] But the Commission of 1812 which had been instructed to inquire whether it was possible to dismantle this monopoly had recommended otherwise. Grain was the staple diet of the population but the island was almost totally dependent on outside supplies for its needs. Scarcity, or serious fluctuations in price, tended to threaten the very livelihood of thousands of Maltese, creating tensions and instability. This, in the view of the Commission, ruled out competition since the principal object of the



Universita' was 'to prevent that very fluctuation in price, which such a competition would evidently have produced.'[107]

There was also the danger that if the whole operation was thrown open to competition

'it would become a mere matter of speculation, and as a speculation it would be abandoned for any other commerce that might offer a prospect of greater or more immediate advantage.'

The result, it was feared, would be famine and insurrection. The Commission concluded that, however,

'odious name of monopoly was,[the] public weal...is not to be entrusted to a few interested individuals, nor can a wise government consent that the very existence of a people should depend upon contingencies. It is only upon the providence and responsibility of Government, that the nation can securely rely for a constant and adequate supply...for the Government alone is profit but a secondary consideration.'[108]

The colonial Secretary reluctantly agreed to maintain the Universita', noting that this had also been promised to the Maltese over the years. What was required, however, was sound management aimed principally at reducing or eliminating its losses. For this purpose it was essential, according to Bathurst, that the financial administration of the Universita' should be taken out of Maltese hands and entrusted to British officials.[109]

For Maitland the Universita' represented the worst 'dunghill of corruption' he had ever encountered and reform was only possible if the enterprise could be brought under his personal direction. This, Maitland conceded, was not immediately possible since the Universita' was the only one institution which mattered mostly to the Maltese. Yet, by the middle of 1814 Maitland had made his first move. On discovering that certain unauthorised measures which had been adopted by Charles Livingstone, whom Oakes had appointed as Head Jurat, had resulted in losses to the government he dismissed him and brought the grain concern under his supervision.[110] However, the three other Maltese Jurats were retained in office.

By the end of 1815 Maitland's strict supervision had succeeded in making the Universita' profitable, profits which he applied to defray the bill for the charitable establishments.[111] Contrary to his original

position Maitland now became firmly convinced that government ought to keep this concern in its own hands. So in 1818 he proceeded to remodel the institution. In a proclamation to the Maltese he declared the Università abolished, stating that the establishment of the Jurats were both inadequate for the important duties confided to their charge and completely at variance with every recognized principle of British rule.[112] In place of the Board of Jurats he appointed three Commissioners, only one of whom was Maltese, with the title of Commissioners of the Board of Supply and who were to conduct the work of the department under his direction. In order to ensure that retailers did not attempt to exploit the people by charging a higher price than that fixed by the authorities, he created two magistrates, one in Malta and another in Gozo, to supervise the markets.[113] The finances and property of the Università he transferred to government with the consequence that this too, like other semi-autonomous establishments, became another department of Government.

A profitable grain monopoly soon attracted, however, the attention of the dwindling number of local merchants who increasingly saw the grain trade as their only hope of survival. It was, after all, the only commerce of consequence and which carried the least risk since the island was dependent for its survival, socially and military, upon grain imports. Maitland was adamant, however, that government surrender of the grain monopoly would provide no lasting solution to the problems of the island. Indeed, he held that the result of such a measure would be political instability and social distress. He contended that while he was in full agreement with economic doctrines which opposed every form of monopoly, such doctrines were not applicable to Malta. The small size of the island and the limited capital to be found in the island, he argued, would not easily allow for new departures from a system which had served its purpose since medieval times.[114]

But in 1822 the merchant lobby was successful and Maitland was forced

by the Colonial Office to dissolve the monopoly. He disapproved publicly of this measure and implemented it 'with considerable doubt and difficulty...' [115] fully convinced that government would soon have to reassume responsibility for the provision of grain. [116] He promised not to interfere in the grain trade

'so long as the poorer classes of the inhabitants be supplied with bread at a fair and moderate rate.' [117]

However, to prevent 'any scarcity, or any sudden and excessive rise in the price of corn', the government was to keep its own stock of wheat to use in such an event. This was to be the responsibility of the Grain Department which he created in place of the Board of Supply. [118]

The loss of the monopoly, however, disrupted Maitland's financial administration for it was no longer possible to defray the expenses of the charities from this source. To recover the loss in revenue, Maitland imposed a fixed duty on imported grain. [119] In truth it was no less than a tax on the staple food of the people and it hit hardest those least able to afford it, i.e. the growing number of the unemployed poor. The duty raised in all between one-fourth and one-third of the government revenue but, because of its nature, controversy was to centre around this tax for more than a century. [120] The Colonial Office was, however, glad to be rid of the embarrassments of the Universita' but its officials, as we shall see in the following Chapter, were to remain particularly vigilant to ensure that the local government did not resort to its old monopoly. [121]

Educational establishments received, in contrast to others, scant attention from Maitland. The University of Studies and the college connected with it were dismissed as unworthy of their name and as the worst managed institutions on the island. [122] His reforms, however, amounted to no more than the swamping of the University Council with British heads of departments, the taking over of their property and funds, and the imposition of student fees for each term. [123] In January 1823 an attempt at reform was made with the appointment of a committee 'to make a minute

investigation into the system of education in the University...', but Maitland died before its recommendations could be implemented.[124] This attitude contrasted sharply with that of the Colonial Secretary. Lord Bathurst had expressed the hope, in 1813, that Maltese attachment to Britain could be strengthened by a gradual and systematic diffusion of the English language. The establishment of government schools in the towns and villages where English could be taught and the gradual introduction of English in judicial proceedings appeared to him as the most appropriate measures for the purpose.[125] These hopes were, however, frustrated for no attempt to improve or extend education was made until 1836 and, as we shall see in later Chapters, Britain was to pay dearly for this omission.

One of Maitland's declared aims in his reform of Maltese public administration was to make the administration "English". Whereas Alexander Ball had sought to appoint to every office, as near as it was practicable, from among the Maltese, almost without exception, under Maitland, they were relegated to subordinate offices.[126] In the Courts and the Charities some Maltese retained some nominal authority, but in every case they were either subordinate to a British head, such as the Chief Justice, or outnumbered by British members on the Board.[127] As a consequence of Maitland's policy the number of British office-holders in Malta rose from fourteen in 1812 to thirty-seven by 1825.[128]

Maitland was not satisfied with making the administration British, but sought also to make it "his" administration by appointing officials whose personal loyalty to the Governor was unquestionable. However, because Maitland's notion of loyalty was based entirely on the basis of patronage, it was a lopsided one. Patronage involves, as James Scott has observed, a 'largely instrumental friendship' in which a person of higher socio-economic status employs his resources and influence

'to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status who...reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron.'[129]

The end product of patronage, therefore, was client loyalty. In an age when patronage rather, than merit, was the chief gateway for offices of every kind, Maitland's concept of loyalty was very similar to that of his political superiors. Like them he expected loyalty, as a matter of course, only from those beholden to him for their appointment.[130] The case relating to the appointment of Zammit as Judge in the Commercial Court provides a good example of the above.

When Maitland took up office in Malta, Giuseppe Nicola Zammit, a lawyer, held the offices of Pro-Secretary in the Government Secretariat and of Uditore in the Segnatura.[131] Although at the time Maitland claimed to have entertained serious doubts as to Zammit's integrity, doubts apparently shared by the public, he did not dismiss him.[132] Neither did he take this step when Zammit's offices were suppressed in the course of his reforms. Instead, he appointed him Judge of the Commercial Court and allowed him to continue to receive his previous emoluments in addition to his salary as Judge.[133] In return Maitland expected Zammit to support his judicial reforms and to help speed up judicial procedures, thereby adopting a contrasting position to that of other Maltese judges. He did not find Zammit wanting in loyalty for within a mere six weeks from his appointment, the latter had decided no less than 260 cases, some of them involving great amounts.[134] Loyalty was rewarded by further benefits. The Governor frankly admitted that 'I have already found it my duty to do everything for him [that] I could', i.e. honouring him with a knighthood in the newly established Order of St Michael and St George and making provision for one of his sons to study in Britain.[135]

Therefore, because of the advantages that patronage conferred, Maitland preferred to have his own appointees and soon after his arrival in Malta he attempted to replace officials in the colony with some of his friends.[136] This, however, was not always possible since some of these offices were said to be in the gift of the Colonial Secretary and only he

had the right to appoint to them. But Maitland did not desist and he was partially successful. Thus, he had the Rev Laing replaced as Chief Secretary and Toole as Auditor-General.[137] Calvert, the head of the Grain Department, he had personally enticed from England, while others who had served with him in Ceylon were also rewarded with appointments in Malta, including Frederick Hankey.[138] After Maitland's death the latter was to become Chief Secretary, having previously served in various offices. Hankey was a particularly close friend of Maitland upon whom the latter completely relied, especially during his frequent absences from Malta. Once, however, death removed Maitland from the scene these officials were to come to exert an exaggerated influence over the affairs of the Colony. Military governors, burdoned as they were with military duties, found themselves unable to act in opposition to the wishes of this cohesive group of officials. The outcome was that Maltese fears of bureaucratic government, raised first in 1801, were quickly revived.

#### CONCLUSION

By the time of Maitland's death in 1824 the process of formal institutionalisation of British rule in Malta had been successfully completed. All authority was vested and exercised by British heads irrespective whether this was in the Courts, the Revenue establishments or the charities. Maitland found, as a result, that he could absent himself from Malta as frequently as he wished and after 1816 the duties of Lord High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands were added to his duties of Governor of Malta.[139] In Malta, under the direction of Hankey, his subordinates carried on with the administration according to the spirit and letter of his instructions.[140] By contrast the Maltese had, according to Agostino Portelli a prominent Maltese merchant, 'lost every privilege and consideration' and had almost become 'strangers in their own country.'[141]

In his long despatches to Bathurst and to Bunbury, Maitland often boasted about the success of his reforms and of his administration in

## The Administration Under Thomas Maitland: 1813-1824

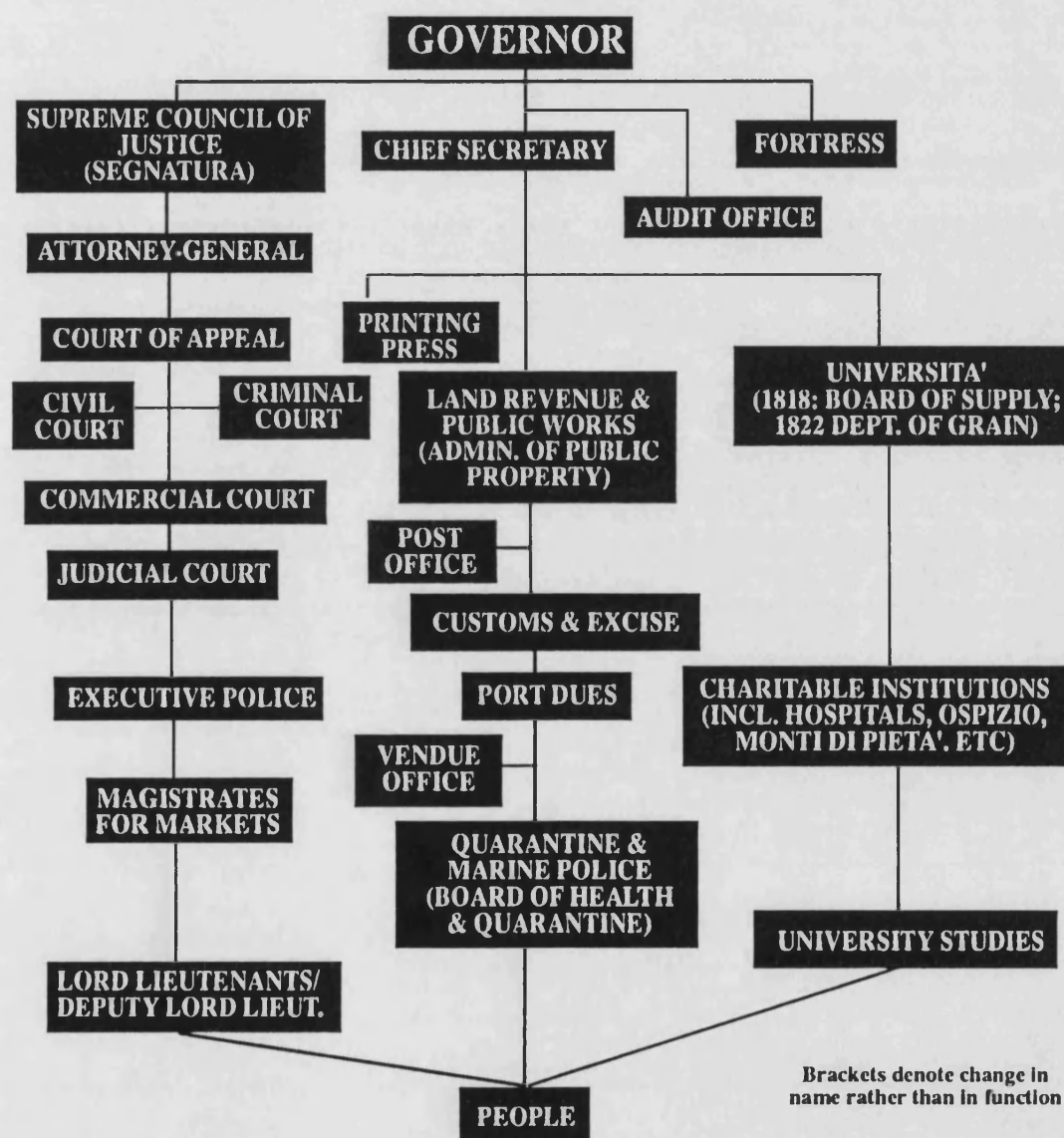


DIAGRAM 4:1

general.[142] Some of his claims cannot, however, be fully or adequately substantiated. He had argued in 1814, for example, that his judicial reforms represented a system of division of powers.[143] This was in contradiction of reality. The Governor was both executive and legislator, and his active presidency of the Supreme Court of Justice placed him also in the situation of supreme judge. Maitland had also argued that his reform of Maltese public administration, once completed, would no longer resemble that of the past. This proved to be only partially true. Several of the ancient judicial courts did disappear and were replaced by new ones. The *segnatura* and the *Audienza* were discontinued and the charities had been placed under a unified direction. The *Universita'*, a body dating to medieval times, had given way first to the Board of Supply, and later, with the dissolution of the Grain monopoly, to the Grain Department. Yet, despite their change in name most of these establishments continued to perform identical or near-identical tasks to those performed in the past. Thus, for example, the Supreme Council of Justice, though different in composition from the *Segnatura*, did continue, as we have seen, to serve as a means of executive control over the judiciary. The administration of the Charitable Establishments was merely consolidated and reformed but none of its responsibilities were shed by the government. On the contrary, it was argued earlier that by taking full control of their administration and finances Maitland had fully institutionalised these services, transforming semi-voluntary and semi-autonomous institutions into full government departments. This becomes particularly evident when diagram 4.1 is compared with Diagram 2.1.

Neither had the practice of government intervention been laid to rest. The cotton factories and the Grain Department, both a creation of Maitland, testified to government readiness to intervene whenever social conditions demanded. One may even argue that Maitland's reforms served to reinforce Maltese dependence on the government rather than reduce it. By turning the



charities into government departments Maitland forfeited for the government the voluntary contributions which many Maltese used to make for the upkeep of these institutions. The Maltese from this period onwards saw their upkeep as the responsibility of government. Furthermore, after the dissolution of the grain monopoly their expenditure could no longer be defrayed from the profits of this activity with the consequence that they became an intolerable burden on the revenue. These points will be raised again in the following two Chapters. All in all, it may be argued, that the most enduring contribution by Maitland to Maltese public administration was the establishment of the foundations for a settled departmental system with a salaried public service, and a centralised system of public accounting.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. As we have seen in Chapter 3, Britain was determined to hold on to Malta if it was at all possible. For a time it appeared that it might have to give up the islands but from after 1803 onwards events moved in favour of British annexation of Malta, not least because Britain retained a firm hold over the islands and their government.
2. The two most extensive studies on Thomas Maitland are C.W. Dixon, (1939), *The Colonial Administration of Sir Thomas Maitland*, Longmans, Green, & Co, London; and W.F. Lord, (1897), *T. Fisher Unwin*, London.
3. Prince Regent's Commission appointing Thomas Maitland Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Malta, 23rd Jul. 1813, C.O.159/4, PRO, Kew, London.
4. W. Hardman, (1909), *A history of Malta during the Period of French and British Occupations, 1798-1815*, Longmans, Green & Co, London, p.529.
5. Liverpool to Commissioners of Inquiry, Instructions, 1 May 1812, C.O.159/4, PRO, Kew, London.
6. Ibid.
7. Report of the Royal Commission of 1812, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London.
8. Malta had only two Civil Governors, Patrick More O'Ferrall and Sir William Reid, although only the former was a civilian in the true sense of the word. Reid was in fact a military officer but during his tenure of office (1851-58) his responsibilities were confined to civil matters. See Chapter Seven.
9. Lennox A. Mills, (1933), *Ceylon Under British Rule 1795-1932*, Oxford Univ. Press, London, p.50.
10. D.K. Fieldhouse, (1982), (2nd ed), *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the 18th Century*, Macmillan Press, London, p.75.

11. Report of the Royal Commission of 1812, C.O.158/4, PRO, Kew, London.
12. D.K. Fieldhouse, *op.cit.*, p.79.
13. *Ibid.*, p.79.
14. M. Wight, (1946), *The Development of the Legislative Council, 1606-1945*, Faber & Faber, London, pp.37-8.
15. *Ibid.*, p.47.
16. A. Bertram, (1930), *The Colonial Service*, Macmillan, London, p.19.
17. See for example Mills, *op.cit.*, pp.31-33.
18. Howe to Russell, 18 Sept. 1839, Documents of the Canadian Constitution 1759-1915, Oxford, (1918). Quoted in H. Frendo, *Party Politics in a Fortress Island*, Midsea Books, Valletta, p.65.
19. W.F. Lord, *op.cit.*, p.170; and A.V. Laferla, (1946), *British Malta*, A.C. Aquilina, Valletta, Vol.I, p.89.
20. P. Bartolo, "British Colonial Budgeting: The First Formative Years.", in *Melita Historica*, Vol.VIII, 1980.
21. A. Bertram, (1930), *The Colonial Civil Service*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p.50; H.L. Hall, (1937), *The Colonial Office: A History*, Longmans, Green & Co, London, pp.124-5; E. Blunt, (1973), *The Indian Civil Service*, Faber & Faber, London, p.82 and pp.261-2.
22. W.A.B. Hamilton, "Forty-Four Years at the Colonial Office", in *Nineteenth Century*, Apr., 1909.
23. H.I. Lee, (1972), *Malta 1813-1914. A Study in Constitutional and Strategic Development*, Progress Press, Valletta, p.31.
24. Bathurst to Maitland, Instructions, 28 Jul. 1813, C.O.159/4, PRO, Kew, London.
25. A.V. Laferla, "Sir Thomas Maitland", in *Archivum Melitense*, Vol.I, 1910; G. Lewis, (1870), (ed), *Letters of G.C. Lewis to Various Friends*, London, p.69; A. Malcolm, (1897), *Letters of an Invalid from Italy and Malta, 1826-8*, London, p.183.
26. W.F. Lord, *op.cit.*, p.170.
27. Maitland to Bunbury, 7 Nov. 1814, C.O.158/40, PRO, Kew, London.
28. Bathurst to Maitland, Instructions, 28 Jul. 1813, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London.
29. *Ibid.*
30. The Report of the Royal Commission of 1812 was never published but reports or rumours about some of its contents circulated freely among the Maltese although many of these reports were incorrect.
31. A.V. Laferla, *op.cit.*, Vol.I, pp.97-99.
32. See Report and its Appendices under C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London.

33. Maitland to Bathurst, 24 Oct. 1814, C.O.158/39, PRO, Kew, London.
34. Maitland to Bunbury, 18 May 1815, C.O.158/26, PRO, Kew, London.
35. Maitland to Bathurst, 11 Jan. 1816, C.O.158/27, PRO, Kew, London.
36. Phase one may be loosely said to comprise the period Nov. 1813 to Oct. 1814. See Maitland to Bathurst, 16 Nov. 1813; Maitland to Bathurst, 27 Jan. 1814; and Maitland to Bathurst, 17 Aug. 1814, all C.O.158/39, PRO, Kew, London; also Maitland to Bunbury, 31 Aug. 1814, C.O.158/40 and Maitland to Bathurst, 13 Oct. 1814, C.O.158/39, PRO, Kew, London. Phase two can be traced from around Mar. 1815 to Jan. 1822 when the grain trade was thrown open to competition.
37. W. Hardman, *op.cit.*, p.533.
38. Bathurst to Maitland, Instructions, 28 Jul. 1813, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London.
39. *Ibid.*
40. Report of the Royal Commission of 1812, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Maitland to Bathurst, 27 Jan. 1814, C.O.158/39 and Maitland to Bunbury, 31 Aug. 1814, C.O.158/40, PRO, Kew, London.
43. Maitland to Bathurst, 13 Oct. 1814, C.O.158/39, PRO, Kew, London.
44. W.F. Lord, *op.cit.*, p.108.
45. Address of His Excellency the Governor to the Judges, Consuls and other Legal Authorities assembled at the Palace of Valletta, 2 Jan. 1815, in Proclamations...(1821), Govt. Printing Press, p.91.
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47. Copies or Extracts of Reports of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Affairs of the Island of Malta and of Correspondence Thereupon, (1838), Count Messina Bequest, National Library, Valletta, Pt.3, pp.32-5.
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50. A.V. Laferla, "Sir Thomas Maitland" in *Archivum Melitense*, 1910.1.52.
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52. Maitland to Bunbury, 7 Nov. 1814, C.O.158/40, and Maitland Proclamation No.111 of 1815, 5 Jun. 1815, C.O.158/26, PRO, Kew, London.
53. *Ibid.*
54. Report of the Royal Commission of 1812, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London.

55. Maitland to Bathurst, 13 Oct. 1814, C.O.158/39, PRO, Kew, London.
56. Maitland to Bathurst, 24 Oct. 1814, C.O.158/39, PRO, Kew, London.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. Paul Bartolo, in *Melita Historica*, Vol.VIII, 1980.
60. Ibid.; see also Fixed Establishment of All the Departments of Government in Malta for the Year 1816 encl. in Maitland to Bathurst, 11 Jan. 1816, C.O.158/27, PRO, Kew, London.
61. Maitland to Bathurst, 13 Oct. 1814, C.O.158/39, and Maitland to Bunbury, 31 Aug. 1814, C.O.158/40, PRO, Kew, London.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Report of the Royal Commission of 1812, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London; also Maitland to Bathurst, 24 Oct. 1814, C.O.158/39, PRO, Kew, London.
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66. Ibid.
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68. Ibid.
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70. Maitland to Bathurst, 24 Oct. 1814, C.O.158/39, PRO, Kew, London.
71. Maitland to Bathurst, 16 Nov. 1813, C.O.158/39, PRO, Kew, London.
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73. Report of the Royal Commission of 1812, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London.
74. Maitland to Bathurst, 16 Nov. 1813, C.O.158/39, PRO, Kew, London.
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83. Maitland to Bathurst, 17 Aug. 1814, C.O.158/39, PRO, Kew, London.
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85. Fixed Establishment of All the Departments of Government in Malta for the Year 1816 encl. in Maitland to Bathurst, 11 Jan. 1816, C.O.158/27, PRO, Kew, London.
86. Maitland to Bathurst, 24 Oct. 1814, C.O.158/39, PRO, Kew, London.
87. Ibid.
88. Maitland to Bathurst, 13 Oct. 1814, C.O.158/39, PRO, Kew, London.
89. C. Willis Dixon, (1939), The Colonial Administration of Sir Thomas Maitland, Longmans, Green & Co, London, p.252.
90. Bathurst to Maitland, Instructions, 28 Jul. 1813, C.O.159/4, PRO, Kew, London.
91. Maitland to Bathurst, 24 Oct. 1814, C.O.158/39, PRO, Kew, London.
92. See Chapters Two and Three.
93. Maitland to Bathurst, 24 Oct. 1814, C.O.158/39, PRO, Kew, London; see also P. Cassar, op.cit., for a detailed study of the charities.
94. Maitland to Permanent Committee of Management of the Charitable Institutions, 14 Jan. 1816, C.O.158/27, PRO, Kew, London.
95. Ibid.
96. Ibid.
97. Maitland to Bathurst, 11 Jan. 1816, C.O.158/27, PRO, Kew, London.
98. Maitland to the Permanent Committee of Management, 14 Jan. 1816, C.O.158/27, PRO, Kew, London.
99. Ibid.
100. Ibid.
101. C. Price, (1954), Malta and the Maltese. A Study in Nineteenth Century Migration, Georgian House, Melbourne, pp.4-5.
102. Maitland's failure to reestablish the Board of Health kept several ports closed to shipping that stopped over in Malta.
103. P. Bartolo, op.cit., in Malta Historica, Vol.VIII, 1980.

104. Ponsonby to Murray, 10 Nov. 1828, C.O.158/61, PRO, Kew, London.
105. Ibid.
106. Maitland to Bunbury, 31 Aug. 1814, C.O.158/40, PRO, Kew, London.
107. Report of the Royal Commission off 1812, C.O.158/19, PRO, Kew, London.
108. Ibid.
109. Bathurst to Maitland, Instructions, 28 Jul. 1813, C.O.158/19 and C.O.158/4, PRO, Kew, London.
110. Maitland to Bunbury, 31 Mar. 1815, C.O.158/26; Maitland to Bathurst, 17 Aug. 1814, C.O.158/39; Maitland to Bathurst, 8 Mar. 1815, C.O.158/26; and Maitland to Bathurst, 11 Jan. 1816, C.O.158/27, PRO, Kew, London.
111. Maitland to Bathurst, 11 Jan. 1816, C.O.158/27, PRO, Kew, London.
112. Proclamation of 30th Dec. 1818, C.O.158/89, PRO, Kew, London.
113. Copies or Extracts off Reports of Commissioners, (1838), op.cit., Pt.I, p.29.
114. Maitland to Bathurst, 11 Jan. 1816, C.O.158/27, PRO, Kew, London.
115. Proclamation of 24 Jan. 1822, C.O.158/89, PRO, Kew, London.
116. Ibid.
117. Ibid.
118. Ibid.; also Copies or Extracts of Reports of Commissioners, (1838), op.cit., Pt.I, p.29.
119. Proclamation of 24 Jan. 1822, C.O.158/89, PRO, Kew, London.
120. This issue, as we shall see over several Chapters of this study, was to assert itself from time to time and in 1877 a Commissioner, Francis Rowsell, was sent to Malta for the purpose of examining ways in which the grain tax could be substituted by other taxes.
121. Hay to Hastings, 29 May 1826, C.O.324/76; Hay to Hankey, 31 Oct. 1826, C.O.324/77; Hay to Hastings, 7 Feb. 1827, C.O.324/78, PRO, Kew, London.
122. Maitland to Bathurst, 9 Apr. 1815, C.O.158/26, PRO, Kew, London.
123. Maitland to Bathurst, 9 Apr. 1815, C.O.158/26, PRO, Kew, London.
124. A. Vella, (1969), University of Malta, National Press, Malta, p.65.
125. Bathurst to Maitland, Instructions, 28 Jul. 1813, C.O.159/4, PRO, Kew, London.
126. Maitland to Bunbury, 18 May 1815, C.O.158/26, PRO, Kew, London.
127. Ibid.; and Maitland to Permanent Committee of Management of the Charitable Institutions, 14 Jan. 1816, C.O.158/27, PRO, Kew, London.
128. Blue Book, 1825, National Library, Valletta.

129. J. Scott, "Patron-client politics and political change in south-east Asia", in *American Political Science Review*, Vol.LXVI, 1972.

130. C. Willis Dixon, *op.cit.*, p.111; also Maitland to Bunbury, 7 Nov. 1814, Desp.1 FF.337r-338r, Palace Archives, Valletta.

131. Maitland to Bathurst, 17 Aug. 1814, C.O.158/39, PRO, Kew, London.

132. *Ibid.*, and Blaquiére, (1813), *Letters from the Mediterranean containing a Civil and Political Account of Sicily, Tripoly, Tunis and Malta*, H. Colburn, London, pp.390-2.

133. Maitland to Bathurst, 17 Aug. 1814, C.O.158/39; see also Appendix D of Report of the Administration to Glenelg 26 Jan. 1836, C.O.158/89, PRO, Kew, London.

134. Maitland to Bathurst, 17 Aug. 1814, C.O.158/39, PRO, Kew, London.

135. Maitland to Bunbury, 2 Nov. 1815, C.O.158/26, PRO, Kew, London; also A.E. Abela, (1988), *The Order of St Michael and St George in Malta*, Progress Press, Vellatta, p.15.

136. Maitland to Bathurst, 11 Sept. 1814, C.O.158/39, PRO, Kew, London. Perhaps the most important recruit was Col (later Sir) Frederick Hankey who, as Chief Sec., in the absence of Maitland and after the latter's death in 1823, virtually ruled the island. See also Maitland to Bunbury, 6 Nov. 1815, C.O.158/26, PRO, Kew, London.

137. *Ibid.*; and Maitland to Bathurst, 24 Oct. 1814, C.O.158/39, PRO, Kew, London.

138. Hastings to Bathurst, 11 Aug. 1826, C.O.158/51; and Maitland to Bunbury, 6 Nov. 1815, C.O.158/26, PRO, Kew, London.

139. A.V. Laferla, *op.cit.*, Vol.I, p.120.

140. Layard (OAG) to Bunbury, 4 Jul. 1815, C.O.158/26, PRO, Kew, London.

141. Portelli to Commissioners of Inquiry, 1836, RML Bibl.MSS.263, Doc.15, pp.133-134, National Library, Valletta.

142. Nearly all of his letters were of this kind. As examples see Maitland to Bathurst, 13 Oct. 1814, C.O.158/39, and Maitland to Bathurst, 11 Jan. 1816, C.O.158/27, PRO, Kew, London.

143. Maitland to Bathurst, 27 Jan. 1814, C.O.158/39, PRO, Kew, London.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ECONOMIC DEPRESSION AND THE PRELUDE TO REFORM: 1824-1832

In 1822, while surveying the socio-economic condition of Malta, Maitland observed that

'there is possibly no possession under the Crown of England where the population has suffered so deeply and so severely owing to the course of events as His Majesty's subjects on this island...' [1]

It was a statement that was to be reiterated by his two successors, the Marquis of Hastings and Sir Frederick Ponsonby, throughout the next decade or so. Indeed, as we shall see below, the economic situation of Malta and the social condition of its people was to be the dominant issue at the time. It served, among other things, to expose the shallowness of many of Maitland's so-called reforms in the public service and to bring into discussion several prominent items of public expenditure. Public service size, salaries and pensions were in fact issues which until 1824 had failed to excite Colonial Office attention but which were soon to become areas of dispute between the latter and the administration in Malta. Furthermore, as we shall see towards the end of this Chapter, the crisis in Malta and the failure of both the local government and the Colonial Office to implement effective reforms was to allow the re-emergence, under new and more energetic leadership, of the movement of Maltese representative government. The impact made by this movement was at its greatest between 1832 and 1848 a period which is covered in the following Chapter. However, as the title of this Chapter indicates some of the issues raised retained their importance over the next decades.

The events to which Maitland had alluded to in the introductory quote, were the plague, the subsequent decline of Malta as a commercial base, and the loss of its principal overseas markets for cotton yarn. In the years that followed, however, the situation was to become progressively worse. In 1825, a Committee appointed by Hastings, Maitland's immediate successor, to inquire into the condition of the lower classes of Maltese society,



reported that many were 'on the verge of extreme want' while others could at any moment be 'reduced altogether to a state of starvation.'[2]

By 1828 the latter stage had been reached. In Valletta poverty-stricken Maltese from the country districts competed with the urban poor for relief of any sort. The description by Malcolm, a British resident of Valletta, of the rural poor is worth reproducing here for it conveys more forcefully the actual state of affairs in Malta. It also helps to explain subsequent Maltese pressures for political reform.

'Figure to yourself', he wrote to his friend in Glasgow, 'crowds of human beings, men, women, and children, some in a state of absolute nudity, with all the others in rags, pouring in from the country every morning to implore a single morsel of bread; old men scarcely able to walk; women the picture of famine... No picture of fictitious distress...conveys anything like an adequate idea of the real misery of these unfortunate Maltese...' [3]

The Maltese, he concluded, had no alternative left but to lie down and die. That his picture of affairs in Malta was not an exaggerated one is confirmed both by official and private sources.[4]

At the time various causes were said to be responsible for this situation. Some, mainly foreigners, claimed that it was the result of lack of initiative on the part of the Maltese. This conclusion, however, seems to contradict the many positive things said about Maltese enterprise and resourcefulness during the years of prosperity (1805-1812).[5] Others, including Governors, blamed Malta's large and increasing population. 'The population of this island', wrote Hastings, 'is beyond the scale in which the circumstances of the country can furnish openings for its industry...' [6] Frederick Ponsonby, who succeeded Hastings as Governor in 1827, held much the same view. The prosperity engendered during the war years, especially between 1805 and 1813, he observed,

'created and maintained a population far beyond the internal resources of the island... Peace took away the external wealth, but the population remains.' [7]

British policy towards Malta was also said by some observers to be responsible for the situation in Malta. James Stephen, who was at the time

Legal Adviser to the Colonial Office, was of the opinion that Maltese commerce had suffered because of British reluctance to admit Maltese shipping to the privileges of colonial shipping, on the grounds that Malta was held

'by a less secure tenure and as more likely to revert to the Dominion of some neighbouring and rival state.'[8]

Maltese shipping had certainly suffered as a result of the narrowing, in 1817, of the terms on which the carrying of the British flag was granted to Maltese vessels.[9] But Maltese commerce had suffered other blows with the signing of the Anglo-Sicilian treaty of 1819, and later, with the reciprocity agreements concluded by Britain with both Austria and Greece.[10] The former served to consolidate the carrying trade between Malta and Sicily in Sicilian hands while reciprocity agreements admitted Austria and Greece to the status of most favoured nations, thereby freeing their shipping from discriminatory charges in Maltese (and other colonial) harbours, but without admitting Maltese vessels to similar privileges in Greek or Austrian ports.[11] In addition to these difficulties there had also been the plague.

Each of these explanations had some basis in fact but more to the point was the explanation furnished by Ponsonby which, for the first time, placed greater emphasis on the Island's loss of foreign earnings. The loss of 'external wealth' tended to result, almost immediately, in widespread unemployment and, eventually, poverty. During the time of the Order a similar development tended to be partially offset by earnings from cotton exports, especially in the country districts where every home had a loom for spinning cotton.[12] The rapid decline of the Maltese cotton industry had, by 1828, wiped away these internal resources and served to demonstrate that, without a shadow of doubt, the once partially dependent Maltese economy had become totally so.[13]

In the circumstances, the onus for finding a solution to the crisis came to rest, almost solely, on the local administration. Apart from the

normal practice of giving alms or small pensions, various schemes and strategies were adopted.[14] In 1824, for example, in a bid to save Maltese shipping from extinction, the Marquis of Hastings reinstituted the Board of Health which Maitland had arbitrarily suppressed in 1813.[15] In the absence of a Board charged with supervising the strict application of the quarantine laws, vessels from Malta were considered, at European ports, as automatically carrying a foul bill of health and therefore, subjected to the full period of quarantine. This served only to impose further burdens on Maltese shipping and to make it even less competitive.[16] Lord Bathurst had objected to Hastings' reform fearing that the surrender of the Governor's arbitrary authority over quarantine would lead to a less strict observance of the regulations with consequent danger to the health of the garrison.[17]

The Colonial Office, and the British Treasury, also strenuously opposed another of Hastings' schemes, i.e. that of the setting up of a House of Industry for girls.[18] The intention of the Governor was to provide shelter and employment to several hundred destitute girls, the latter being expected to defray the cost of the establishment from the proceeds of their labour. As the funds employed had been donated for this purpose several years previously Hastings was strongly of the view that Treasury approval of his scheme was not required. Furthermore, unlike his predecessor, he had no intention of taking those funds over.[19] This was a clear reference to those private charitable funds once administered by the Government and which Maitland had taken over thereby reducing several charitable institutions to mere government departments.[20] Unwilling to enter into discussions which would have probably dragged on for months, 'especially when one considers the distress' prevailing in Malta, Hastings proceeded to appoint an administrative committee and to establish the institution at a building in Floriana, just outside the bastions of Valletta.[21]

Briefly, in the second half of the 1820s, the local administration came to entertain the hope that the silk industry would one day regain for Malta the prosperity that cotton had once provided. The administration had succeeded in attracting to Malta a company which had been set up to promote the silk industry in the colonies. But despite every assistance furnished by the government the local company folded after only a few years, prejudice by the company's agent in Malta towards Maltese participants in the venture being one of the principal causes.[22] British prejudice was also the cause for the delay in approving the suggestion of the Governor in Malta that Maltese be allowed to enlist in British vessels and regiments serving in the Mediterranean.[23] The Governor had originally sought permission to raise a Maltese regiment but the idea had been rejected by the War Office.[24]

However, of all the strategies adopted by the local administration in its bid to deal with the crisis, emigration appeared to be the one best calculated to provide a long term solution for the problem of unemployment. Over population, redundant population, had become the watchwords of the time (and have remained so to this day). Various plans for the setting up of Maltese settlements in Corfu and Greece were attempted, as well as government-aided migration to the West Indies.[25] None of these schemes, however, achieved any success and by the middle of the 1830s the socio-economic condition of the Maltese had not registered any improvement.[26] But, as each policy failed to have any impact on the prevailing crisis, public attention and debate began to increasingly focus on every aspect of the administration and not just on its failings. Many Maltese, and some British observers, came to the conclusion that British administrators in Malta must accept some responsibility, not perhaps for the crisis itself, (though some did feel inclined to say so), but for adding in various ways to the burdens and hardships that the Maltese poor had to endure.[27] The general view was that these burdens were the result

of an needlessly wasteful and expensive administration.

By 1827, Colonial Office thinking was also moving in this direction for the solution it proposed was that of cutting public expenditure. In the first case the Governor was instructed to sell the government yacht, purchased two years earlier, recall from their Government-sponsored studies in Rome the Maltese artists studying there, and to close down the House of Industry established in 1825 which the government refused to do.[28] In the second instance Colonial Officials began demanding detailed explanations regarding every aspect of local expenditure from the Governor and his Chief Secretary. The result of this was that the local administration was to be constantly rebuked 'for an insufficiently minute statement of expenditure'[29] or because 'the details which were given in that statement were not conveniently arranged.'[30]

The effect of these measures, however, was only marginal. More drastic measures were required if public expenditure was to be reduced substantially, for new developments were making the already critical financial situation in Malta more worrying. A prolonged economic crisis was in itself dangerous for discontent often led to grave political instability. In Britain, where an economic crisis was also in evidence, the labouring poor had combined with the middle classes to demand political reform.[31] Riots and various demonstrations had taken place which had occasioned even loss of life.[32] In Malta disturbances of this kind seemed unlikely. In 1827 Governor Ponsonby had informed the Secretary of State that the Maltese

'have struggled with their adversity with exemplary patience and nothing but their great moderation...could have enabled them to exist during the pressure of late years.'[33]

Yet, Lord Hastings, his predecessor had advised against the removal from Malta of one single British regiment for he feared that political disorder might result as the crisis deepened.[34] Already, the evidence showed that as unemployment rose so did the number of burglaries and robberies.[35]

A second worrying factor was the financial deficit of the administration in Malta which by 1826 had already reached nearly £18,000.[36] Recurring financial deficits in a colony, tended to create difficulties for the Colonial Office for, eventually, the colony would have to be aided by funds from Britain. These funds would have to be approved by Parliament and applications of this sort tended to provoke debates from which the Colonial Office and its head hardly ever emerged with honours. This is not to suppose that colonial affairs enjoyed any special place in Parliamentary business or that the welfare of the colonies was a motivating force in these debates. Indeed, when William Huskisson was appointed Secretary of State in place of Bathurst in 1827, he was simultaneously informed that Commons detail business of Colonial Secretary was not very heavy.[37] It was rather the case that these debates provided the radical and liberal element in both Houses of Parliament with an opportunity to try and promote political and financial reform at home.[38]

The radical and liberal argument went something like this. The main reason for the crisis in a colony was the extensive use of patronage in colonial appointments. At home the government sought to maintain its position in office by the distribution of colonial offices to relatives, friends and supporters. It was admitted that many of 'those appointed were seldom useful, and occasionally harmless,' although some were also guilty of mischief.[39] As pressure for favours on the government increased, more useless offices tended to be created to satisfy these pressures. The result was, that the finances of a colony became inadequate for defraying public expenditure, both because of inefficient and sometimes corrupt administration, and because colonial administrations tended to be too large.[40] In order to bail out these administrations, the government at home resorted to funds from Britain thereby employing taxes paid by the British public. This in turn served to inflate public expenditure at home which, by radical and liberal standards, was an indication of an extremely

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incompetent government. Hence, the necessity for reform in colonial administration.[41] In 1827 an attempt was made by some radical and liberal members of the House to set up a Parliamentary Finance Committee to investigate colonial finances.[42] They were not immediately successful but Parliament did manage to lay down that the grant of financial aid to any needy colony, such as Malta, was to be regulated 'in anticipation' and was only to be granted after its estimates for the relevant years had been approved.[43]

Colonial Office officials had every good reason to expect that a debate about Malta would prove highly embarrassing. Patronage in appointments to the Maltese public service and, the creation of small offices for the same purpose, had both been resorted to by Lord Bathurst, the Colonial Secretary and by Maitland, and to a lesser degree by their successors. We have seen in the previous Chapter that as a consequence of Maitland's obsession with making the administration "English" the number of British office-holders in Malta had risen to thirty-seven, a threefold increase on 1813. It was said of Maitland that he employed his patronage like a monarch appointing many of his friends to public offices.[44] He also created several useless small offices, such as those of Lord Lieutenants, which he bestowed on Maltese individuals whose loyalty to his administration he deemed useful.[45]

Lord Bathurst's reputation for patronage was equally notorious. It was reported that patronage was of more importance to him than the interests of the colonies and the press did attribute the critical situation in some colonies to his jobbery.[46] One newspaper declared in 1823 that it had 'never heard a syllable uttered in praise of His Lordship's colonial administration by any individual or party'.[47] The judgement of the Times when he was finally removed in 1827 was equally scathing. 'There never was tolerated', it wrote, 'a worse colonial minister than that unrespected Lord.'[48] In Malta, Bathurst's jobbery was somewhat obstructed by

Maitland's but no sooner had the latter passed away than he moved to impose his authority over appointments there. He instructed the Acting Governor in Malta that 'immediate notice...of all vacancies occurring in the Civil Establishment'[49] must be forwarded to London and followed up his instruction by appointing his friends and relatives. Three appointments stand out from amongst others, namely the appointment of Jarvis as King's Assessor at £800 per annum, that of his son-in-law Frederick Ponsonby as Governor, and that of his son Seymour, first as Agent for Malta and later as Treasurer with a salary of £700 annually.[50]

Jarvis's gratitude was overwhelming. 'It is neither to the interested solicitations of friends, nor to my own personal merit', he wrote to Bathurst, 'but to your Lordship's generosity and sense of justice alone that I am indebted for the enjoyment of my office.'[51] Seymour Bathurst ought to have been similarly grateful. The office of Agent for Malta which he held from 1817 to 1825 was, at £500 a year, a pure sinecure since Malta had hardly any trade at all.[52] The office of Treasurer in the administration of Malta, although requiring his presence there, he treated equally as a sinecure, absenting himself frequently from the island and leaving his duties to be performed by his Maltese deputies.[53] Seymour had been appointed Treasurer in 1827 when it appeared almost certain that the ministry of Lord Liverpool, in which his father served as Colonial Secretary, was closely edging towards defeat.[54] Ponsonby, his brother-in-law, acquitted himself more honourably as Governor displaying both zeal and commitment in the execution of his duties.[55]

Of course there was a price to be paid for this policy. The annual cost to the local government in public service emoluments had, by 1826, passed the £40,000 mark, a figure which was almost equivalent to one-half of total public expenditure.[56] It was a situation which had led Robert Hay, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office to complain that 'the Civil Establishment of the Island is upon much too expensive a



scale.'[57] Of the total wage bill 37% or about £15,000 were received by the 37 British public servants employed in Malta.[58] The other 63% represented the salaries received by more than 580 Maltese public servants, each averaging around £50 annually.[59] The cost, however, of maintaining such an extensive public service fell generally on those least able to afford it, the Maltese labouring poor.

Public service size and Maltese welfare, especially that of the labouring poor, had become intimately connected after 1822. As was observed in earlier Chapters, the revenue of the government in Malta had been derived from property rents, mercantile duties, and from the profits of the Government grain monopoly. The latter profits, however, were lost to the government when the grain monopoly was suppressed in 1822. To make good its losses the government had imposed a duty on grain which on an annual basis accounted for about one-third of all government revenue.[60] It was a tax on the staple food of the people and as poverty increased the people become less able to afford the price of bread.

'Would you believe it?', queried Malcolm in one of his letters. 'This very government under which the people are perishing with hunger, derive a revenue...out of all the grain consumed in the island. In other words they exact as duty one loaf out of every three that is purchased by the poor...'[61]

A reduction in the number of government offices seemed indispensable if the people were to be relieved of the burdens imposed by the grain tax.

By 1827, with Lord Bathurst out of the way, the Colonial Office had become more agreeable to this view. In that year Hay told Ponsonby that he entertained no doubt that the Governor

'will find it expedient to reduce several unnecessary offices...either at once, or as vacancies may occur...'[62]

Three months later, in his despatch of July 4 Hay was more specific. The Chief Secretary's Office, he told Ponsonby, was clearly overstaffed, as was the case with every other office. The salary of the Governor's own private secretary was much too high and ought to be reduced, while the Governor should seriously consider whether the services of Jarvis, the Kings

Assessor, were really required.[63] The protests of the Chief Secretary that 'the work of reduction is so difficult', Hay dismissed as self-deceiving adding that it would find short shrift with a Parliamentary Finance Committee.[64] Hay, therefore, urged the Governor to embark on the work of reduction resolutely, despite

'the individual misery which may be occasioned by turning out of employment men who have been, for sometime, engaged in the public service.'[65]

Eventually some reductions were effected but their number was so small and insignificant that the overall impact was negligible.

The need for a reduction in offices and salaries was one that was generally shared by the Maltese. They accepted that if there was to be a reduction in the bread tax or if a case was to be made for a similar reduction in mercantile duties, which in their view was essential if commercial activity was to receive a stimulus of some sort, public expenditure cuts on offices and salaries had to be made.[66] These views seem to indicate a departure from traditional Maltese views, (reiterated towards the end of Chapter 3), which neither opposed the existence of a large public service nor indeed the idea that public revenue should be spent on schemes which provided employment to the lower classes whenever the necessity arose. In fact they were nothing of the sort. The public service with its offices and activities had, for more than a century, provided scope for and sustained the existence of a native class of professional and educated persons. The island was too small and, by and large, too poor to otherwise provide openings for this group. They could not in the 1820s and 30s envisage an end to this role of the public service.[67]

In the case of schemes that provided employment for the labouring poor the emphasis was on the phrase 'whenever necessary'. Persons from the labouring poor had always sought employment in one of the several establishments of the public service but the vast majority of them, in normal times, looked elsewhere for employment.[68] Only in times of severe

crisis did they turn "en masse" to the government for help and relief of every kind. But once they did, they expected help to be made available almost as if by right. That was their centuries-old concept of good government.[69] In the 1820s what the Maltese labouring poor wanted was 'to be permitted to work',[70] that is to earn their sustenance through productive work and not to have to depend on government relief and handouts. Indeed, Agostino Portelli, a leading Maltese merchant, maintained at the time that, in the absence of an alternative strategy, the government should of itself create the necessities of employment, levying 'impositions', with discretion, on those best able to afford them as a way of support for such expenditure.[71] The Maltese were, therefore, generally opposed to cuts in public expenditure in this sphere.

If, however, the Colonial Office was serious in its desire to reduce public expenditure in Malta, the Maltese contended, it could begin by exempting the island from its contribution to the "military chest" and by getting rid of several British public officers holding office in Malta.[72] The first was an onerous business placing on the revenues of the island the burden of defraying the salaries and wages of the General Military Staff and of the local regiment, the provision and maintenance of rent-free military and naval premises, and the transfer of all annual surpluses, whenever these occurred, into the "Military Chest" as Malta's contribution towards its defence.[73] The Maltese failed to understand why they should be made to bear the expense of maintaining the military fortress for, as Hastings had observed in 1824, 'if not charged with military expenses, the income drawn from the Island would suffice for all its other concerns.'[74]

From a Maltese point of view the second case was equally clear cut. British public servants, they held, were both excessively paid and unnecessary and they regularly cited examples to prove their point.[75] The Postmaster, for example, attended at his office only when the mail packet arrived from Britain, whereupon he collected his personal correspondence

and departed again.[76] At a salary of £800 per annum the Collector of Land Revenue, Mr Nugent, once a singing celebrity in London, spent most of his time organising musical productions rather than at his desk.[77] Seymour Bathurst, as already noted, absented himself from Malta regularly,[78] while Captain Symonds, Captain of the Port and Head of the Marine Police had failed to return to Malta from his visit abroad.[79] When Symonds was finally replaced in 1828 the salary offered to his replacement was considerably reduced

'....not only with a view to effect a saving, but because.....Captain Symonds having been so long away from Malta, his duties could not have been of a very severe nature.'[80]

Several other British officials also held, in addition to their civil offices, military commissions to which they were required to give attention.[81] The duties of nearly every British public servant, therefore, for one reason or another were carried out by their deputies, mainly Maltese, at a fraction of their salary.[82]

London, however, disagreed. Instead, colonial officials thought that savings could be effected if the existing system of pensions was reformed. In the early decades of the nineteenth century no formal provision for the granting of pensions existed in Malta. British governors had, however, continued the practice, common at the time of the Grandmasters, of granting small pensions to Maltese public servants or their families.[83] Quite frequently these pensions were granted by the Governor without either the knowledge or sanction of the Colonial Office.[84] In doing so, however, Governors tended to be motivated by two main factors. Their first motivation arose from the poverty of many public servants, their large families being frequently the cause. The salaries of Maltese public servants tended to be so inadequate that after cost of living and other expenses were deducted nothing remained which could be channelled into personal savings. Thus, even after a service of almost sixty years many could not afford to retire without incurring the risk of serious

poverty.[85] The situation was such, Ponsonby observed in 1828, that

‘no Maltese functionary, unless obliged to do so, would ever think of giving up his situation to receive a pension less than the full amount of pay...’[86]

Matters had been made worse by a dramatic rise in the price of foodstuffs and Ponsonby found himself constrained to grant "house-rent" allowances to public employees whose salary did not exceed £250 per annum i.e. the vast majority.[87]

A final consideration was efficiency. Governors could not tolerate indefinitely the continued employment of persons ‘who from old age and infirmity are unable to perform their duty,’[88] as this affected the efficiency of the various departments. Thus, for example, in 1826 Hastings granted a pension to Eduardo Montanaro, a Maltese clerk who had served for at least 57 years, for ‘he had become unable to discharge, from the very infirm state of his health’, his various duties.[89] Similarly, in the interests of efficiency, Ponsonby found himself called upon to retire on a pension several ‘decayed servants of the government,’[90] an example of whom was Mr Muller, the Collector of Customs, who had become so nervous and shattered in his constitution that ‘the poor old man’ could hardly sign his name.[91] Certainly, one consequence of retaining on the civil establishment ‘perfectly useless persons’ was higher costs, for others had to be ‘unavoidably employed at an extra expense to carry on the business of the government.’[92]

Whatever the motives for the granting of pensions the Colonial Office, starting from around 1825, made several attempts to curb the "de facto" power assumed by Governors in Malta to grant pensions. Hastings was informed, for example, that the Secretary of State

‘objected to the introduction of anything like a settled principle that His Majesty’s Government is called on to provide for the widows and families of all public servants, whatever might have been the nature of their function.’[93]

He was, therefore, instructed to send home, for the approval of the Secretary of State, each individual application accompanied by a report

outlining the merits of the case.[94] Hastings, however, resisted these pressures and the Colonial Office decided to try again in 1827 with the appointment of Ponsonby as his successor. In one of his first despatches to the new Governor, Hay urged him to

‘introduce some salutary reforms in the practice of bestowing pensions [which had] been carried further than it ought to have been.’[95]

But the situation Ponsonby found in Malta prevented him from following this advice and a year later was still promising to ‘attend to the instruction that no claim in future is to be admitted for a pension, by widows of civil servants of my government.’[96]

However, in 1828, in an attempt to bypass an existing Colonial Office freeze on salary increases the proposed a plan for the establishment, in Malta, of a pension scheme for all public servants, Maltese and British.[97] The plan recommended, among other things, that

‘pensions should be granted to Maltese functionaries in actual employment even after the short period of five years service.’[98]

The plan was rejected by London. Ponsonby was told that the Secretary of State saw no reason ‘why a native of Malta should be entitled to claim a superannuation allowance after a short service of five years.’[99] Instead he insisted with the Governor that the informal system of granting pensions existing in Malta should

‘by degrees be discontinued, as there is nothing of the kind to be found in any other foreign possession of the crown.’[100]

Public servants who desired a pension should establish a fund for the purpose among themselves, and that it would be more convenient if the Governor when submitting proposals on the subject adopted as his guide the rules laid down in the British Superannuation Act.[101]

It was, however, not until the next decade that the Colonial Office finally succeeded in putting a stop to the practice in Malta and elsewhere. In April 1830 Governors were informed by circular letter that they would be held personally responsible for any increases in salaries or allowances granted to any member of the public service without prior Treasury

approval.[102] This circular seemed to have had the desired effect for two years later Ponsonby complained against

'the refusal given for the last three years to the proposals which I have been obliged to submit for granting some pension to individuals...'[103]

In other words, the dilemma facing the government remained.

The threat of a Parliamentary Finance Committee which had hung over the Colonial Office for some years finally arrived in 1830 in the form of a Commission to Inquire into the Receipt and Expenditure in the Colonies and Foreign Possessions.[104] The members of this Commission, the first of its kind to be appointed, were apparently unsure of their real powers for Hay informed Ponsonby that

'the Colonial Commission now sitting in Downing Street, has taken Malta in hand as the first experiment of their powers.'[105]

Malta was in fact one of four colonies investigated by the Commission none of which were visited by its members.[106] Despite this, some of the conclusions reached by the Commission with regard to Malta were particularly relevant to the situation of the island. Indeed, in some areas the Report of the Commission may be seen as a vindication of Maltese grievances.

An example of this was the issue of who should bear the expense for military expenditure in Malta. The Commission tended to agree with the Maltese view that in this sphere the responsibility belonged to the home government. Malta was after all an imperial naval and military station. Neither did the Commission consider it right that an island having no resources of its own and which had lost its external revenue, should be expected to continue to carry this burden.[107] It recommended, therefore, that Malta should no longer be responsible for the salaries of the General Staff and that future annual surpluses should not be transferred to the Military Chest.[108] It was also proposed that the expense of maintaining public buildings and facilities used entirely by the services should be transferred from the local government to the Ordnance Department.

The rest of the Report concerning Malta was mainly directed at achieving further cuts in public service expenditure. The Report began by stressing the need for constant Treasury supervision over the finances of the island and

‘that no new charge should be incurred or continued without previous sanction and direction of that high and responsible authority.’[109]

The aim of the Commission was to stop Governors in Malta, as the Colonial Office had often sought to do, from granting benefits of a non-monetary kind to some members of the public service. One example of this was that of rent-free accommodation. Under Maitland a practice had begun whereby every British member of the Maltese public service was allowed the use of a government house either rent-free or at a nominal rate.[110] In 1825 Bathurst had instructed Hastings to restrict, with immediate effect, this concession to the six highest-ranking members of the service.[111] But both Hastings and later Ponsonby, ignored this instruction.[122] Indeed, as will be illustrated in Chapter Six, the recommendation of the Commission of 1830 that every individual member of the public service should receive a fixed monetary payment ‘to the exclusion of houses and every other emolument or advantage...’ was similarly defied.[113]

The Parliamentary Commission of 1830 was also intrigued, as the Royal Commission of Inquiry of 1812 had been, by the whole issue of grain supplies and sales in Malta. It was seen in the previous Chapter that in 1822 the government grain monopoly (or *Universita'*) was formally abolished and that the task of importing grain had been taken over by private commercial interests under a system of open competition. To guard against sudden scarcity or artificially high prices the government undertook to keep a stock of grain of its own promising, however, not to interfere in the market unless forced to do so.[114] Vested interests on both sides, however, prevented this arrangement from working satisfactorily.

As Maitland had originally feared the island possessed only a handful of merchants who possessed enough capital to meet the mammoth task of



purchasing the bulk supplies of grain required to feed both population and garrison.[115] Soon these few merchants had organised themselves into a cartel and the 'government monopoly' was 'replaced by private monopoly'.[116] The situation that arose as a consequence of this development, which Maitland to his credit had foreseen, was not lost on the Colonial Office. In 1826 Hay complained that the merchants supply could not be depended upon and it was

'only by extreme vigilance on the part of the Government of the Island that the inhabitants can be preserved from all distress which arises from a scarcity of bread.'[117]

Neither was the situation lost on the Head and Assistant Head of the Grain Department who had charge of the government stock of grain and who received a commission from its sale. Scarcity and/or high grain prices tended to present them with an excuse to unload on the market some of the grain from the government stock.[118] It was, therefore, in their personal interest too that the arrangement arrived at in 1822 should be defeated and the old government monopoly reverted to. To this extent Hay was correct in his assessment of developments in Malta, first in 1826 when he observed 'that circumstances appear to be combining to bring it [monopoly] again into play'[119] and then in 1827 when he demanded to know whether the local government had embarked on a 'virtual although not declared resumption of the Corn Monopoly.'[120]

On this issue the Commission of 1830 found itself being pulled in two different directions. In an island where three quarters of the dietary requirements of the population had to be imported, it did not judge that it could legitimately recommend that the government should not be allowed to have in its possession the means by which to protect the community in an emergency. But neither did it appear right in its view that government should continue to act as a grain merchant and for this reason it was the view of the Commission that the Grain Department should be abolished. In the circumstances the conclusion adopted by the Commission was ambivalent.

On the one hand it strongly advised 'that Government shall, as speedily as may be possible, discontinue the practice of interfering as a merchant in the grain market,' while on the other hand it conceded that, given 'the particular circumstances of Malta' it was expedient that Government should continue to keep a stock of grain.[121]

Ponsonby pronounced himself against the implementation of this reform, although he frankly admitted its correctness 'upon general principles.'[122] He pointed out that, had it not been for the Government the already difficult situation of the Maltese would have become infinitely more precarious, for the merchants had suddenly shipped off their grain to England where its price was much higher than in Malta.[123] Ponsonby concluded that

'...Every day convinces me how dangerous it would be to depart from a system which practically has operated most beneficially for Malta.'[124]

Ponsonby's arguments though not different from those of his predecessors won the approval of both the Secretary of State and of the Treasury. The former, also echoing former colonial Secretaries, decided against both the Commission and the merchants since there was, in his view,

'no calamity which the people of Malta would view with greater dread than the suspension of the control of Government over that important branch of their internal economy.'[125]

The Treasury, on its part, promised not to press against the decision of the Colonial Secretary claiming that

'it would be an act of cruelty and injustice to apply general principles [given] peculiar nature of the Island of Malta...'[126]

The question of "general principles" came up again over the question of public service size in Malta. Hay had informed the Governor during the Inquiry that the Commissioners had great reductions in view, and that they were 'much struck with the number of employees in your little island.'[127] But even in this, however, the Commissioners found it difficult not to accept that Malta presented a special case. 'We have to remark,' they wrote,

'that in forming such large establishments...successive Governors of Malta appear to have proceeded on an admitted policy that the peculiar circumstances of that colony, justified the Government in affording aid to the native Maltese in a degree not otherwise admissable on general principles.'[128]

Even so the Commission considered the number of public service employees much too great and recommended that various offices be suppressed.[129] Among the offices proposed for reduction were some which the Maltese considered as pure sinecures, including that of Agent for Malta.[130] The Commission also held that the salaries of most British public servants in Malta were far too high and recommended substantial cuts in their levels, sometimes, as in the case of that of the Chief Secretary, by almost one-half.[131]

These recommendations, as well as others discussed earlier were, however, resisted either by the local government, the Colonial Office or the Treasury in Whitehall. Several small offices were in fact reduced but the brunt of these fell on the Maltese. Hankey, the Chief Secretary in Malta confessed to Hay that he hoped 'to God, no more reductions of Maltese functionaries will take place' for those already made had 'filled the island with discontent and the Maltese are not a people to complain being hurt.'[132] The Treasury, on its part, rejected the Commission's suggestion that Malta be exempted from payments to the "Military Chest" on the ground, according to Hay, 'that the Mother Country had a just right to expect this measure of assistance from her foreign dependencies...' [133] for their defence. Finally, Lord Goderich as Colonial Secretary failed to press for cuts in the salaries of some British officials as proposed by the Commission and even indefinitely postponed consideration of their other proposal for the abolition of the office of Agent for Malta.[134]

The Commission of 1830 had presented all concerned with an opportunity for reform in Malta. It seemed, in fact, that the powers that be had come to recognize that their so-called "general principles" of political economy may not necessarily apply given the 'peculiar' or 'particular'

socio-economic circumstances of Malta. But the opportunity was not taken. One reason for this, perhaps, stemmed from the fact that since the Commission never visited Malta it lacked first-hand knowledge of the situation there and was, therefore, unable to press forward its recommendations. But the consequence of British failure to implement meaningful reform in Malta was an upsurge of political discontent. In 1832, Maltese leaders, led by Camillo Sceberras and George Mitrovich, presented Britain with a formal demand for Constitutional reform.[135] These leaders, backed by several hundred prominent Maltese, had arrived at the conclusion that no reform was possible until the Maltese had their own Council or Congress.[136] Representation of some sort was seen by them as the only means by which reform of Maltese public administration and of the economy could be achieved. The intensity with which this new movement for political reform conducted its campaign was to influence developments in Malta for the rest of the century and beyond. Although its aims were not conceded until 1921 the Sceberras-Mitrovich movement was to score some important gains within the next few years. It succeeded, for example, in gaining for Malta a Council of Government similar to that existing in other Crown Colonies and, in 1836, the institution of press freedom which had been denied the Maltese since the time of the Order.[137] With regard to the Maltese public service the "Comitato Popolare" (or Popular Committee), as Sceberras and Mitrovich had christened their movement, was to push for and gain the gradual readmission of Maltese public servants to executive offices from which they had been ousted by Maitland. This development, which will form one of the central themes of the following Chapter, was assisted by the efforts of John Austin and George Cornwall Lewis, two liberals who in 1836 received a Royal Commission to investigate into every aspect of Maltese affairs and to make recommendations aimed at removing discontent from the island. In this sense a coalition of Maltese liberals was to receive support for some of their demands from British liberals who

had themselves gained political influence as a result of the British movement for political reform which had culminated in the Reform Act of 1832.[138]

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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12. C. Price, op.cit., pp.2-3 and p.26.
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50. For Jarvis see Jarvis to Bathurst, 1 Dec. 1824, C.O.158/38, PRO, Kew, London; Ponsonby was married to Lady Emily, youngest daughter of Lord Bathurst. Seymour, another of Bathurst's sons, was appointed Treasurer just before Lord Bathurst resigned his office of Sec. of State for the Colonies in 1827.
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57. Hay to Ponsonby, 4 Jul. 1827, C.O.324/78, PRO, Kew, London.
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105. Ibid.
106. First Report of Commissioners to Inquire into the Receipt...(1830), op.cit., C.O.158/67, PRO, Kew, London and Parliamentary Papers, Vol.IV of 1830.
107. This is based on estimates arrived at by Price (1954) and refers to the amount earned by Malta through the cotton trade and income from Europe. It excludes British military spending in Malta.
108. First Report of Commissioners to Inquire into the Receipt and Expenditure in the Colonies and Foreign possessions, 1 Nov. 1830, C.O.158/67 and Parliamentary Papers, Vol.IV, 1830.
109. Ibid.
110. Manley-Power to Bathurst, 21 Nov. 1825, C.O.158/42, PRO, Kew, London.
111. Copies or Extracts of Reports of the Commissioners, (1838), op.cit., Pt.I, pp.61-2.
112. Ponsonby to Bathurst, 16 Mar. 1827, C.O.158/55; and First Report of Commissioners to Inquire into the Receipt...(1830), op.cit., C.O.158/67, PRO, Kew, London.
113. Copies or Extracts of Reports of Commissioners (1838), op.cit., Pt.I, pp.61-2.

114. Proclamation of 24 Jan. 1822, C.O.158/89, PRO, Kew, London.
115. Maitland to Bathurst, 11 Jan. 1816, C.O.158/27, PRO, Kew, London.
116. Ibid.
117. Hay to Hastings, 29 May 1826, C.O.324/76, PRO, Kew, London.
118. Hastings to Bathurst, 11 Aug. 1826, C.O.158/51; Calvert to Hastings, 12 Aug. 1826, C.O.158/51, PRO, Kew, London.
119. Hay to Hankey, 31 Oct. 1826, C.O.324/77, PRO, Kew, London.
120. Hay to Hastings, 7 Feb. 1827, C.O.324/78, PRO, Kew, London.
121. First Report of Commissioners of Inquiry into the Receipt...(1830), op.cit., C.O.158/67, PRO, Kew, London.
122. Ponsonby to Goderich, 30 May 1831, C.O.158/68, PRO, Kew, London.
123. Ibid.
124. Ibid.
125. Stewart (Treasury) to Hay, 1 Oct. 1831, C.O.158/70, PRO, Kew, London.
126. Ibid.
127. Hay to Ponsonby, 4 Jun. 1830, C.O.324/82, PRO, Kew, London.
128. First Report of Commissioners of Inquiry into the Receipt...(1830), op.cit., C.O.158/67, PRO, Kew, London.
129. Ibid.
130. Ibid.
131. Appendix to First Report of Commissioners of Inquiry into the Receipt... op.cit., C.O.158/67, PRO, Kew, London.
132. Hankey to Hay, 4 Jan. 1832, C.O.158/72, PRO, Kew, London.
133. Hay to Ponsonby, 5 Mar. 1831, C.O.324/83, PRO, Kew, London.
134. Ibid.; and Stewart to Hay, 1 Oct. 1831, C.O.158/70, PRO, Kew, London.
135. Ponsonby to Goderich, 20 Jul. 1832, encl. two Maltese Petitions, C.O.158/73, PRO, Kew, London.
136. Ibid.
137. 1835 Constitution/Letters Patent, 1 Apr. 1835, at C.O.159/12 and C.O.161/2, PRO, Kew, London.
138. The activities of this movement finally resulted in a Commission being sent to Malta, in 1836, to inquire into Maltese affairs. The Commission made up by John Austin and George Cornwall Lewis was instructed to investigate the Comitato's demand that Maltese Civil Servants should be readmitted to executive offices. Their favourable recommendation led the Secretary of State to concede this demand.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE LIBERAL IMPACT: 1832-1846

The year 1832 has often been considered by historians as a watershed in British political development. In that year the Whigs, who had only come to power a year earlier, had managed to push through both Houses of Parliament what has become known as the "Great Reform Bill of 1832." [1] It was not as revolutionary an Act as its title suggests but many saw it as a vital breach in the great wall of aristocratic privilege prevailing at the time. The radicals, who had throughout supported liberal efforts to reform the franchise and the distribution of electoral seats, saw the Bill as a beginning, a stepping-stone to further reform. [2] It also seemed likely, in 1832, that this liberal victory would serve as a springboard for reform in the colonies. Before coming to power these liberals, with radical support had constantly campaigned against all form of abuses and mismanagement said to exist in the colonies. They had attacked colonial sinecures, patronage in appointments to colonial offices, and the appointment of military officers as colonial governors. They had often argued that colonies were expensively administered and one reason for this, apart from patronage, was the system of autocratic government to be found there. Indeed they tended to argue that the rule of autocracy as set up in the colonies had even had a distinctively deteriorating effect on the constitutional government of the metropolis itself. [3] Therefore, Colonial reform was, in their view, therefore, both necessary and desirable. But the direction political and administrative reform of colonial government should take was not entirely clear to them in 1832.

Whether or not the movement for political reform in Britain had exerted any influence on Maltese liberals has not been made adequately clear by historians. But within a month of the new Bill being passed two Maltese petitions were forwarded to London by Governor Ponsonby. [4] These petitions demanded, among other things, the institution of representative

government, the proper administration of justice, a free press, the appointment of a civil governor, an end to the high salaries paid to British public servants in Malta, and that the career prospects of deserving local public servants should no longer be handicapped because of their native origin, by their exclusion from executive offices. [5] The demands of the Maltese petitioners following so closely as they did on the heels of the liberal victory may be said to have constituted a challenge or test of the readiness of the new government in Britain to match rethoric with action.

The response of British liberalism to Maltese political agitation provides the subject matter of this Chapter. It was a response that began hesitatingly in 1835 with the grant of a nominated advisory Council of Government and the recognition for the first time of the principle of press freedom in Malta, and which reached its climax in 1838 with the readmission of Maltese public servants to superior offices in the Maltese public service from which they had been excluded by Maitland after 1813.[6] The latter reform was the product of a Royal Commission of Inquiry sent out to Malta in 1836. It was composed of two well known liberals and was in itself to provide tangible proof of British liberal desire to implement radical reform in the administration of the island. For this reason, therefore, the work of this Commission will provide the focus of attention for this Chapter.

#### BEFORE THE COMMISSION

The arrival of the Maltese petitions at the Colonial Office in the summer of 1832 was not a welcome event and discussions as how best to proceed were to take up the next three years.[7] It had always been the view of the British government that Malta's strategic importance made it necessary that all matters, civil and military, should be vested in one authority.[8] Consequently, those appointed as governors had all been persons of high military rank and in their conduct of public affairs they

were responsible to the Secretary of State alone.[9] The Colonial Office was evidently determined to maintain this line of policy for as long as possible for, in 1831, it was reported that Lord Goderich, the Colonial Secretary, 'was not anxious that any measure'[10] involving the creation of a Council should be encouraged. This policy continued undisturbed until 1835 when a nominated advisory Council of Government, consisting of the Governor and seven other members, four of whom were senior public officials, was finally established in the island.[11] But as Hilda Lee has observed in her study of Maltese constitutional development, the institution of this Council brought little or no change to the way the islands were governed.[12] The unofficial members held office only "during pleasure" while the Governor had the power to suspend them or act contrary to their advice, although both of these powers were to be used only in extreme circumstances.[13] In brief, the Governor was allowed to retain nearly all of his former powers. The leaders of the Maltese lobby for political reform, especially Camillo Scceberras and George Mitrovich, rejected the new Constitution. They continued to maintain that the problems of Malta would never be resolved until the government was placed under the direction and control of an elected Council or Consiglio Popolare. Furthermore, because Council members were all nominees of the Crown, they enjoyed no popularity with the public and were seen to be worse than useless.[14] But representative government was not a realistic option at the time. The view expressed by Hay at the Colonial Office was more reflective of British imperial policy. Representative government in Malta, he wrote, was objectionable and unsafe on strategic grounds. But it was also unacceptable on constitutional principles for, as he observed, the Secretary of State had already 'expressed his sentiments in a very decided manner upon this subject'[15] in the case of Canada, and one could not see, therefore, any reason for a deviation from policy in the case of fortress Malta.

In 1835, however, the Maltese case was dramatically reopened by the publication in London of a pamphlet by Mitrovich entitled "The Claims of the Maltese founded on Principles of Justice." [16] In it Mitrovich reiterated the demands of the petitioners of 1832 and accused Britain of breaking its promises to the Maltese and of oppressing them. The fact that Mitrovich could freely publish his pamphlet in London but not in Malta seemed to lend creditability to his charge. Several British personalities, including William Ewart, MP for Liverpool, John Hume leader of the Radicals, Samuel Mills Jnr., Rintoul of the "Spectator" and others were, as a result of this publication, attracted to the Maltese cause. [17]

Lord Glenelg, who had just assumed the office of Colonial Secretary, readily admitted the justice of the Maltese claim for a free press, determined not

‘to repress in a small European community that very freedom of publication which we justly value as amongst the highest distinctions of our domestic and colonial policy.’ [18]

He also felt, however, that Maltese accusations against British rule in Malta had placed British honour on trial and had, therefore, to be investigated. He, therefore, instructed the Acting Governor - Ponsonby having in the meantime relinquished his post on grounds of ill-health - to hold an immediate inquiry into all the Maltese claims and to report accordingly. [19]

The inquiry was given the cold-shoulder by the Maltese and the administration was forced, by way of report to the Secretary of State, to reply to Mitrovich's accusations paragraph by paragraph. Its report, entitled "A Vindication of the Past and Present Administration of this Government" defended all the measures adopted by the administration over the years, including Maitland's removal of Maltese officers from executive offices and the granting of rather high salaries to British public servants in Malta. [20] While conceding that the 'Maltese ought not to be universally excluded' from such offices, the Report questioned 'to what extent the

Advocates for the Maltese mean to push their pretensions on this point. '[21] The Report argued, quite correctly at the time, that there was 'nothing in what has taken place in Malta...which is at variance with the long established policy and practices of the British Government in relation' to other colonies.

With regard to the second accusation the Report argued that the high salaries received by the British in Malta were,

'far from being an injury, an advantage to the Maltese people in general for with them will always remain the chief part of the salaries'[22]

of these British servants. Furthermore, the Report concluded that as long as

'these salaries do not exceed the produce of the territorial estates in the island, which belong to the Crown...no fair grounds of complaint [existed] on the part of any one who professes to advocate the interests of the Maltese.'[23]

On the one hand, the Maltese boycott of the inquiry was interpreted in London as a clear manifestation of the great lack of confidence which British administration enjoyed in Malta. On the other hand, the arrogant tone of the Report gained the local administration little favour with Lord Glenelg and with James Stephen, an influential liberal, who had just replaced the Tory Robert Hay as Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office.[24] Stephen was one of a group of liberals who held to the view that British colonialism was justifiable, only insofar as it served to better the condition of the people under its charge, remove all forms of exploitation and to spread christianity.[25] Glenelg was somewhat of the same view and this explains why the Report prepared by the local administration failed to satisfy the Colonial Office. It was decided, therefore, to send to Malta a Royal Commission to carry out a thorough examination into the affairs of the colony.

#### THE COMMISSION OF 1836

Those appointed by Glenelg to act as members of the Commission were John Austin, a professor of jurisprudence and George Cornwall Lewis, a

lawyer who had previously served on two Poor Law Commissions in Ireland. Lewis was the son of an active liberal reformer while both he and Austin were close friends of James Stephen at the Colonial Office. More to the point they were persons who enjoyed the utmost trust among those liberals and radicals who were active on the side of the Maltese. Lewis was later in life to enjoy a distinguished career both as MP for Hereford and as a leading member of the British Cabinet.[26] Their brief from the Secretary of State was to inquire into Maltese demands for a representative assembly, to advise HM's Government whether Maltese 'possessed of abilities and probity fitting them for public office' should be employed in executive offices, and to conduct a general review of all branches of the administration.[27] In so doing, however, Austin and Lewis were reminded to keep in constant view Malta's role as an important naval and military station and the interests of Empire associated with it. The latter instruction was in itself an important limitation on how far-reaching reform in Malta could eventually be, as a similar instruction to the Commission of 1812 had previously demonstrated.[28]

George Lewis and John Austin, the latter accompanied by his equally distinguished wife Sarah,[29] arrived in Malta in October 1836 to a tumultuous welcome from the population. It was a welcome that left a deep impression on the visitors. 'Till this moment', Sarah confided to friends in England,

'I have hardly been conscious of the awful task committed to my husband; I felt those cheers, eager and vehement as they were, as the voice of the suffering calling for help and for justice.'[30]

Lewis also gave an account of their 'sort of triumphal entry' into Valletta in a letter to his friend Edmund Head, observing that the people had evidently thought, or were led to believe, that the Commissioners had been sent out to Malta with some sort of Magna Carta for the islands.[31]

The reception given to the Commissioners was apparently counter balanced by an informal briefing from some of the leading British officials



in Malta. Lewis seems to have been favourably impressed at this first meeting with Sir Frederick Hankey, the Chief Secretary, whom he described as a 'man of ability and of pleasant, frank manners.' [32] It appears that during this briefing attempts at influencing the Commissioners were skillfully made for, in his first letter from Malta, Lewis dismissed Mitrovich as a well-meaning but weak man who wished 'the Government to buy him...body and soul for £200 a-year.' [33] The petitioners of 1832 he referred to as 'agitators' and remarked that the remedy for the 'real grievance of the Maltese', namely an excessive population the result of ignorance and superstition, lay 'beyond the reach of Commissioners and governments.' [34]

It was a view that could have scuppered the inquiry before it had actually began, but neither this impression nor that of Hankey were to be enduring. Indeed, Hankey himself was to fall victim to the reforming zeal of Austin and Lewis. Hankey had first held office in Malta as Maitland's private secretary. He was the Governor's right hand man and Maitland had been quite eloquent in his praise of Hankey in several of his despatches. [35] Hankey succeeded to the office of Chief Secretary in 1824 after Richard Plasket had resigned. [36] From this period onwards Hankey became the unacknowledged governor of the island. Whenever he was away from the island Governors tended to complain of difficulties in conducting the affairs of the island. [37] However, when Governors were themselves on leave from Malta, Hankey used to report that their absence made no difference to the administration. [38] Not surprisingly, the tendency in the Island was to attribute every ill existing in Malta to his measures and personality. [39]

The Commissioners' view of the Maltese was quite ambivalent. It was a view worth briefly pursuing here for on it was to rest the judgement of the Commission as to whether the Maltese were fit to enjoy representative institutions and/or to occupy executive offices in the public service. The Commission of 1812 had judged the Maltese as unfitted by character to enjoy

any portion of political power and to hold offices concerned with finance.[40] On the basis of this judgement the Maltese were denied their 'Consiglio Popolare' and Maltese public servants were removed and had remained excluded from departmental headships. In 1836 the Maltese were invariably described by Lewis and the Austins as sharp, acute, intelligent and remarkable in their 'practical talent'[41] almost as the British. In several ways they were seen as resembling the Irish although their deportment was considered as 'irreproachable',[42] 'unobjectionable'.[43] and 'far superior to anything to be met with in Ireland.'[44]

But the Maltese were also seen as 'exceedingly ignorant',[45] 'narrow, uninteresting, frivolous',[46] 'docile'[47] and for the most part illiterate.[48] Poverty was a characteristic common to all classes and what distinguished the lower from the middle classes was education rather than wealth.[49] 'The merchants, the advocates, the doctors, and the Government employes' formed, according to Lewis, 'the really valuable part of the population' and although lacking in 'facts and principles' there was among them 'a very fair sprinkling of intelligence.'[50] As a race the Maltese were described as 'an Arab race'[51] or as a 'half-Arab' people, their looks bearing 'a striking resemblance to the Jewish.'[52]

This question of race was of great importance for it was a generally accepted belief in Britain that peoples who were not Anglo-Saxon in "race", or Protestant for that matter, were unfit by temperament for representative institutions.[53] Non-Europeans, in addition to being unfit by temperament, were also considered as too corrupt to be trusted to hold offices in the civil service of their country.[54] Nothing, it was held, would go right unless controlled by British officers.[55] Opposition to this general outlook had, however, grown from a small, but influential, group of liberals. Among these were members of the anti-slavery movement, James Stephen, John Stuart Mill, some colonial civil servants, and both Austin and Lewis. These liberals were motivated by the belief that all

individuals, irrespective of race, were capable of improvement provided that they had good government and education.[56]

This point of view was remarkably expressed by Lewis in one of his letters to Head before his nomination as a member of the Commission for Malta. 'Before I went to Ireland', he wrote

'I had very strong opinions as to the influence of race on the Irish character. But when I came to look at things more nearly, and to see all the demoralizing influences to which they have been and are subjected, I asked myself whether a people of Germanic race would have turned out much better; and I really could not answer in the affirmative...Protestant Germans might, if properly oppressed and brutalized, be made as bad as the Irish...'[57]

He had learnt from others with first hand experience that the same could be said of the negroes. This led Lewis to conclude 'that external influences had been far too much disregarded' in past British estimates of the character of other peoples and races.[58]

Austin and Lewis were to discover in Malta that one important external influence was how members of the colonial power behaved towards the population. In Malta, according to Sarah Austin and George Lewis, in Malta, the British had excluded, by their insolence and prejudice, even the upper ranks of Maltese society from all the official and informal functions that took place from time to time.[59] Lewis observed that the wives of British naval and public officers who had found themselves

'in an unwonted position of power and importance...[thought] it incumbent on them to trample on the Maltese with all the weight of their vulgarity.'[60]

The response of the Maltese was to withdraw from contact with the British and to display their hatred towards them 'with the greatest cordiality.'[61]

Furthermore, those in authority instead of giving the people feelings of self-reliance had 'intentionally kept them in a state of pupillage',[62] discouraged all movement, stifled all inquiry, since printed discussion of all political matters was prohibited, perpetuated ignorance and even 'discountanced trade as being troublesome'.[63] The only difference that

existed, in Lewis's view, between the paternal military despotism set-up in Malta and that of Austria in Lombardy was that the former, in contrast to the latter, had done nothing for primary education.[64]

Was representative government, as the Maltese leaders were claiming, the solution to this state of affairs in Malta? The Commissioners did not think so. Indeed, they were of the view that the very notion of a self-governing dependency was in itself a contradiction in terms.[65] In addition there was the security of the fortress to be considered. Although military rule was obnoxious to them, given the situation of Malta and affairs generally in Europe, it was difficult to see how it could be jettisoned overboard so easily. But this difficulty did not, however, in their opinion justify the War Office policy of keeping Malta 'in a perpetual state of siege.'[66] Neither did the Commissioners wish to leave the Maltese under this military despotism with its consequent

'neglect of the affairs and interests of the dependency, and...the danger of a disturbance of its tranquility.'[67]

It was a difficult issue to resolve and by the time the Commissioners had left Malta in 1838 they had not reached any conclusion with regard to this question. When they did, some years later, their recommendation for a partially elected assembly, the Crown retaining powers of disallowance and legislation by Order-in-Council was, purely on military grounds, rejected by the Colonial Office.[68]

The Maltese demand for readmission to superior offices in the public service offered the Commissioners an opportunity to subvert the hitherto existing official oligarchy of British officers which, as their private writings demonstrated, was

'imperfectly checked either by the direct interference of the supreme government or by the indirect influence of the opinion of the dependency or the dominant country...'[69]

that Maltese clerks ought to replace British Heads of Departments had to be justified on grounds of economy, efficiency, ability, probity, incentive for development, as well as political advantage, rather than their own

personal assessment of individual British public officers. In fact, as will be demonstrated below, in their 'Report Relative to the Employment of Maltese in Executive Offices' Austin and Lewis defended their recommendation that Maltese should henceforth be allowed to hold superior offices on these several criteria.[70]

The Commissioners argued, for example, that the Maltese were better acquainted than Englishmen with the circumstances, laws, institutions and traditions of the island, as well as having a perfect knowledge of the local language and of Italian, the official language of Malta.[71] It was a reasonable argument for as Lewis had observed, Malta had

'a set of ancient complicated institutions, founded upon a totally different set of legal and political principles from those of England'

and consequently every subject required special study before one could feel reasonably certain that one was not committing any mistakes.[72] This sentiment was echoed by another Commissioner forty years later[73] and found confirmation in the fact that Austin and Lewis had failed to bring to a successful close their own inquiry even after eighteen months of continuous residence in Malta.[74] They were led to conclude, therefore, that even an English official of first rate ability 'would not be able to acquire an extensive and accurate knowledge of its system.'[75] Furthermore, since salary levels in Malta were too low, especially when compared to those of other colonies, those attracted to the service from Britain were,

'for the most part...persons who, for various reasons, have been unable to succeed in their respective professions, or have otherwise failed to advance their fortunes in England.'[76]

Consequently, it was their view that 'the government would be better served by the ablest among the natives than by the ablest Englishman'.[77]

There was political advantage to be gained too. Systematic exclusion of Maltese from superior offices after 1813, especially from those which they had regularly occupied under the Order of St John, was said by Austin and Lewis to be one of the main reasons for discontent among upper and

middle class Maltese.[78] They agreed with Agostino Portelli, a Maltese merchant and, since 1835, member of the Council of Government, that this exclusion had

'made them a degraded class in their own country...[and] lowered them in the estimation of Englishmen and foreigners, and even in their own estimation.'[79]

Lewis also wrote privately

'of the intense hatred with which they regard the English, who fill all the well-paid offices; and of the eagerness with which they look forward to the time when the places will be given to Maltese.'[80]

The local authorities were fully aware of the situation but rather than redressing matters they had sought to gain popularity by a resort to the practice of 'giving numerous small places to inefficient persons.'[81] It was a practice which according to the Commissioners had proved equally unpopular for it merely created a class of disappointed candidates for places and disgusted the mass of the public who saw in such a system 'its tendency to produce a costly and inefficient administration'.[82] In addition it had 'the bad moral effect of inclining young men' from the upper classes to look to the Government for their provision.[83]

The question of cost immediately gave rise to questions of economy and taxation and we saw in the previous chapter that these had become inextricably connected after 1822. In their petition of 1832 the Maltese had sought an end to the high salaries paid to British public servants both as a measure of economy and as a way of reducing taxation. They had further argued that, were these offices to be given to Maltese officers, a considerable saving would be effected since the salaries granted to Maltese officers would be much lower. Austin and Lewis agreed with the Maltese petitioners on every count. The salaries of 28 British public servants amounted, in 1838, to no less than thirty-five per cent of all annual salaries and wages paid by the Government, and to fifteen percent of all revenue.[84] The removal of British heads of departments and their replacement by their Maltese deputies was, therefore, bound to produce a

substantial saving. The Commissioners also felt that the savings which this measure would produce would be of a long term character for they saw no reason why the salary of a Maltese head should go above the annual income of a principal Maltese landowner, merchant, advocate or physician which they estimated at £400 per annum.[85] They were certain, moreover, that at 'this salary a competent Maltese might always be found to fill the office, though a competent Englishman could hardly be found to fill it for the same remuneration.'[86]

They similarly agreed that this measure would make it possible for the government to reduce taxation, especially the duties on grain, thereby making it popular among the lower classes. In an earlier letter to Glenelg, the Colonial Secretary, Austin and Lewis had expressed their difficulty in adequately conveying to him a true

'sense of the vehement and universal dislike of taxation which exists in this island, and of the vigilance with which every increase of the public burdens is watched...The amount of public money received by each person, the duties which he performs, or has performed for it, are known with a precision and canvassed with an interest which are only possible in a small community. The salaries and pensions of the present and former servants of Government are known with far greater accuracy, and are much more generally discussed in Malta than in England, notwithstanding the attempted secrecy of the Government in the one country, and the unbounded publicity of Government in the other.'[87]

Replacing British heads with Maltese officers was considered by the two Commissioners to be a less painful method of effecting economies in Government expenditure and reducing taxation in Malta. Another was that of reducing the tasks of government and consequently the size and number of government departments. We shall return to the latter a little later when we shall examine Austin and Lewis's proposed reorganisation of the several branches of Maltese administration.

The Commissioners held that the opening up of all levels of the civil service to Maltese would serve as an inducement to the people to qualify themselves for the public service.[88] They observed that many of those in authority were quick to complain of the difficulty of finding competent Maltese to fill the higher offices of the service. If this had been truly the case, remarked Austin and Lewis, then the fault should not be

attributed to the Maltese. Higher offices had

'been almost invariably filled with strangers from England, and no encouragement has been held out to the Maltese subordinates to qualify themselves for the chief offices in their departments.'[89]

Nevertheless, despite the length of time during which 'this spirit-breaking system'[90] had been practised, the Commissioners entertained 'no doubt that the island would soon produce its fair proportion of competent candidates for office'[91] provided that the criteria for appointment to these offices was based on merit.

Merit, of course, had become the watchword of the liberals in Britain and the policy Austin and Lewis recommended in Malta was intended also as an attack on patronage. Because of this latter system, in Malta, the Report states, 'inefficient Englishmen have, in many cases, been placed at the head of departments'[92]. Indeed, inefficiency was seen by them as 'almost inseparable from the system of appointing Englishmen to these departments.'[93] Efficiency could be restored if Maltese possessing general ability and appropriate knowledge were appointed heads of departments instead of these inefficient British officers. This aim would be best achieved, according to Austin and Lewis, if the principle of departmental promotion was introduced. This meant in practice that an officer to be considered for promotion to a vacancy in a department must, in addition to having general ability (merit), be a serving member (appropriate knowledge) of that department.[94] Was the practice of departmental promotion as suggested by the Commissioners to be accepted, colonial patronage in Malta would have been automatically eliminated.

Austin and Lewis sought to carry their argument with the Secretary of State by suggesting that

'the appointment of any Englishmen to the headship of any department in which he had never served in a subordinate capacity, is impolitic and unjust'.[95]

Sir Henry Bouverie, who had only just replaced Ponsonby as military Governor of Malta, objected. If adopted, he observed, a system of



departmental promotion 'would at once fetter the Government in providing the most efficient servants as heads of the different departments' depriving it of

'the power to select generally from the civil service those officers considered most fitting for, and most deserving of promotion to the heads of the respective departments.'[96]

Lord Glenelg, the Colonial Secretary, agreed but saw other difficulties. He pointed out that an occasion may arise when 'the public interest may require a departure from a system of departmental promotion' and he was therefore unwilling to enter into any pledge to the Maltese which might in future prove embarrassing to HM's Government.[97] All that he was prepared to concede was that the claims of the subordinate officers of every public department in Malta would be carefully weighed 'before any stranger to their particular branch of the public service is placed over them.'[98] For this reason the Secretary of State instructed Bouverie to furnish the Colonial Office with periodic reports, but

'before vacancies actually occur...in favour of the advancement...of any meritorious officer serving in a subordinate rank.'[99]

He would not promise, however, that such recommendations would be invariably followed but that they shall not be 'passed over on any light or ordinary grounds.'[100]

The tendency of British heads of department to absent themselves frequently from Malta was seen, by the Commissioners, as further reason for them to recommend promoting Maltese to these offices. The latter were unlikely to be called away from their official duties by private affairs abroad. The case of Mr Nugent provides a good example of this tendency. Nugent who had replaced Seymour Bathurst as Treasurer in 1827 and who was highly thought of by the Commissioners to the extent that they wished to see him promoted to Chief Secretary, received a salary of £900 a year, the equivalent of half the total expense on salaries in his department.[101] Yet within a ten year period Nugent had spent almost two and half years away from the island, leaving his duties to the care of his Maltese deputy,

Vincent Casolani.[102] In contrast Maltese public servants being at home had few inducements to absent themselves from their official duties and 'rarely received leave of absence.'[103] Employing Maltese in these offices would, therefore, ensure efficiency and promote economy.

While arguments of economy and efficiency, such as those expressed above, appealed to all sides of the House of Commons as well as to the Colonial Office, the Commissioners were aware that none of these really answered the questions that were bound to be raised, regarding Maltese fitness to fill the superior offices of the administration and whether it was safe to entrust the administration of a fortress colony in the hands of a local bureaucracy? In the past the appointment of Maltese to offices of trust had been objected to, according to the Commissioners, 'on the ground of their alleged want of pecuniary honesty,' but they observed that none had so far openly advanced or offered to prove the truth of this allegation.[104] Austin and Lewis, therefore, rejected this allegation pointing out that several Maltese were, and had been for sometime, entrusted with the immediate custody of the Government money and that their superiors had generally acquired the habit of delegating their duties to their Maltese deputies.[105]

Furthermore, the Commissioners could see no justification to withhold from the Maltese what, in theory, had already been granted by Parliament to British subjects in India. Indeed, as early as 1833, the India Charter Act had affirmed that race, colour, religion, and place of birth should not bar Indians from office in the government.[106] Although this part of the Act remained a dead letter for almost the whole of the century, it was clear that the Commissioners were aware of it when they recommended that Maltese should be appointed to the executive offices of the civil administration. They reported that

'The Maltese are an European and Christian community, and far superior in institutions, manners, science and arts to the most advanced of the Asiatic nations,'

and though they might not have been as advanced as the Commissioners had hoped, 'their moral and intellectual condition was not as low as that of the Hindoos.'[107] In other words, what Parliament had affirmed in the case of Indians ought now to be affirmed and promulgated in the case of Maltese whose European and Christian culture made them as much, if not more, worthy of such a concession. In any case, their view of Maltese fitness to occupy executive offices was identical to that expressed earlier by Ponsonby when he noted that the Maltese were 'in every respect qualified to perform the duties of most of the principal offices under Government.'[108] Austin and Lewis recommended, therefore, that as far as it was possible, and with the exception of the offices of Chief Secretary, Assistant Secretary and Auditor-General, all offices in the Maltese public service should in future be filled by Maltese.[109]

The Secretary of State concurred that 'in the distribution of offices in Malta' the claims of the Maltese should be given the utmost consideration but he declined to subscribe to their view that British subjects who were neither natives nor persons domiciled in Malta should be permanently excluded from offices in Malta. It was a view that required to be suppressed rather than encouraged. Its natural tendency was

'to prevent the native Maltese from regarding themselves, and from being regarded by their fellow-subjects as members of the British Empire collectively; but rather as an isolated class attached to a small and remote possession of the Crown, to which alone their prospects of advancement in life must be confined.'[110]

But fitness and trust were two separate issues where the administration of a fortress was concerned. Some commentators had disseminated rumours that Maltese loyalty to Britain was suspect and that the Maltese would at the first opportunity exchange British rule for that of the Russians.[111] Lewis, however, dismissed such commentators quite strongly, totally convinced of Maltese loyalty to the Crown. What the Maltese desired was reform not Tsarist rule.[112] General Bouverie, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the island did not fully agree. He

informed the Secretary of State that

'he was not prepared to follow the Commissioners, into their analysis of the character of the Maltese, as compared with other people living under the British Crown...[and]that so long as Malta is considered as a fortress and a British naval station, the entire setting aside of Englishmen...for the purpose of bringing forward Maltese for offices, will be fraught with inconvenience and difficulty, and not impossibly with danger.'[113]

There is no doubt that Bouverie was partly right. How was a Colonial Governor expected to safeguard imperial interests in a military colony if he was to be dependent for advice and support on officers recruited almost exclusively from a subject population? It was not inconceivable that such officers would, in the long term, be more prepared to extend their influence and power to other than the interests of Empire. Civil servants in Crown Colonies, as has been seen in this and previous chapters, exercised great authority. Indeed, Austin and Lewis had attributed most of the responsibility for the state of affairs they found in Malta directly to British heads, even accusing them of collecting a revenue to divide it among themselves.[114]

But such strong opposition from the "man on the spot" would have normally received the support of the Secretary of State for the Colonies. It was perhaps a sign of the times that on this occasion the governor's advice was rejected and, instead, Lord Glenelg proceeded to confirm the appointment of three Maltese officers, Sir Vincent Casolani, Louis Casolani and Mr Bonavia, as heads of Government departments in place of Englishmen.[115] This was done, as the Commissioners had urged

'to prove practically, and to the conviction of the [Maltese] public, that the principal places under the Government of the island will be open in future to its meritorious subordinate officers.'[116]

There was other opposition, however, and this, not surprisingly, came from those British officers who were to be replaced by Maltese civil servants. Captain Hunn, for example, realizing that he was to be removed from his office as Harbour Master of Malta, accused Louis Casolani, the officer selected to replace him, of peculation.[117] Casolani demanded a public inquiry which, at the request of the Governor, was conducted by the

Commissioners.[118] The charges against Casolani were totally disproved and Captain Hunn was retired from the service within a month of the investigation being concluded.[119]

#### REORGANISATION OF GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

It may be said that Austin and Lewis conducted their inquiry into the several branches of government in the true spirit of British liberalism. Their aim was to reduce public expenditure, minimise the role of government and lessen in a more definite manner Maltese dependence on the government. As with other Commissioners before them, however, these two liberal gentlemen were to discover that Malta had some unique features which did not always easily allow for the application of liberal principles. This was true, for example, in the case of the Commission of 1812 which had readily accepted, given Malta's economy and strategic importance, that the government grain monopoly should be continued and that the government should itself act to solve the acute housing shortage existing in Malta.[120] Of course, in 1812 protectionism and mercantilism still held sway in Britain but by 1837 the dominant values of British political economy had become increasingly influenced by free trade principles and the new Commissioners were less likely to be so indulging.

In reporting on the revenue of the island Austin and Lewis had remarked that they found the expenditure of the government objectionable, 'not so much from its amount, as from the nature of many of the expenses. While many civil establishments are maintained on a scale of needless expense, some of the most urgent wants of the Government remain unsatisfied and some of its most important functions remain unperformed.'[121]

In other words, it was not the expense to which they were objecting to but the purposes for which this expenditure was being utilised. Had the government used the revenue to extend education and encourage local private enterprise there would have been no complaint.

Needless expense was, in their opinion, occasioned by the existence of unnecessary departments and offices. Of the existing departments Austin and Lewis held that the Department of Marine Police should be merged with the

Department of Quarantine and the Department of Government Works with the Department of Land Revenue. The Commissioners viewed the existing division between the Department of Quarantine and the Department of Marine Police as both inconvenient and susceptible to serious mistakes which might even endanger the health of the population.[122] Their fears were not unfounded for seven days after they had raised the matter the island became the victim of a particularly serious outbreak of cholera.[123] Moreover, the Commissioners held that the policing of the two Valletta harbours could be 'performed, most effectually and most economically, by a single authority, inasmuch as the whole force can then be brought to bear on a single point, in case of any extraordinary need.'[124]

With respect to the other two departments namely those of Government Works and Land Revenue it was the Commissioner's view that the existing division was artificial and that they should be consolidated into one department. This was how things had stood until 1825 when, in order to accommodate William Mackenzie, at the time deputy Head of Land Revenue and Works, Lord Hastings divided the latter in two departments appointing the former as Head of Government Works.[125] Austin and Lewis also put a final stop to the practice by the local government of granting public-owned houses rent-free to public servants and to others.[126] Successive governors had been strictly ordered not to continue with this practice but the instructions of the Secretary of State were, until 1837, flagrantly ignored.[127]

Two government departments which the Commissioners believed would no longer be needed as a consequence of new developments were the Government Printing Press and the Monti di Pieta', the national pawnbrokerage. Austin and Lewis had concluded that, with the introduction of press freedom, the amount of work entrusted to the government press, until then the only one in Malta, would decline rapidly. They envisaged that, on their own, government printing needs would not be enough to make the enterprise profitable and that the government would be better and more cheaply served

by putting its work out to private tender.[128] Similarly, the Commissioners believed that if licences were granted to private individuals of character which would allow them to act as pawnbrokers, the Monti di Pieta', the only legal pawnbrokerage in the island, could be dispensed with. They felt sure that with government vigilance over the new establishments, the public would soon learn to trust these private ventures.[129] In both cases the Commissioners were mistaken. The Governor was not prepared to suppress the government printing office on the ground that, should the new press prove unjustifiably hostile to the Government, it would have no independent means of putting its case to the public but would have to depend on the indulgence of its very opponents.[130] Neither was the Maltese public ready to substitute the centuries old security afforded it by the Monti di Pieta' for that of private individuals.[131] As a consequence both departments were retained and still, to this day, form an integral part of the Maltese public service.

One department which Austin and Lewis did succeed in seeing abolished was the Grain Department. Since the arrival of the British in Malta, British and Maltese merchants had conducted a campaign to wrest from the government control over this item of commerce. Until 1822, however, the government had successfully retained its hold - dating from the Middle Ages - over the corn trade. But its monopoly was finally breached in that year and from then onwards the energies of the merchants had been directed at dissuading the authorities from interfering in the market.[132] In this, however, they had failed. Austin and Lewis, opposed as they were in principle to government intervention in industry or commerce were determined to abolish this department. They were, however, preempted in this by the local administration which, by a minute of the 10th January 1837, had declared its intention to sell-off its stock of grain and to proceed, having done so, to abolish the Grain Department.[133] In the circumstances the two Commissioners were left with the agreeable task of

ensuring that this measure was effectively implemented, securing in the process the retirement on pension of the Head of the Grain Department, that of his deputy and of the Government broker.[134] Thus, in 1837, the government of Malta was finally divested of its responsibility, of over five centuries, of ensuring, directly or indirectly, that the population of Malta was adequately and cheaply fed.[135] There was no immediate public outrage at this measure [136] but the issue of grain provision was to raise its head within the next few years and was to continue to do so until World War Two.

One reason for this was the grain tax which, until the introduction of income tax in 1948, was to remain the principal tax of the island. To Austin and Lewis the levying of a tax on the staple food of the population on the verge of starvation was totally objectionable.[137] But, on inquiring deeper into the matter they were forced to conclude that it was virtually impossible to abolish it. The grain tax provided the government with about £35,000 annually or about one-third of its annual revenue.[138] Even with the strictest of economies the expenditure of the government could not be slashed by the equivalent of this sum. Indeed, while advocating cuts and other forms of retrenchment, the Commissioners hoped that a good portion of the savings made would be channelled into extending education, especially at primary level.[139] Furthermore, given the poverty of the Maltese, direct taxation on income or land seemed to rule itself out. The number of persons who would qualify as taxpayers under such a scheme would be necessarily small and the amount raised in revenue would be greatly below that required.[140] Despite their long-standing opposition to this tax both the British and Maltese merchants admitted of the existing difficulties, adding that the introduction of hitherto untried methods of taxation may also prove particularly unpopular.[141] The best that could be done in the circumstances was that the higher rate of duty levied on grain imported in foreign vessels be repealed and that the lower rate of duty



charged on grain imported in British vessels be made to apply in all cases.[142]

Austin and Lewis managed to affect some savings by the reduction of various offices and of course more savings were expected in the future when eventually most headships were occupied by Maltese officers. Some of the offices reduced included the offices of Chief Justice and Attorney-General, those of Magistrates for the markets, the establishments of the Lord Lieutenants (but not of their deputies), the office of Intendent of Marine Police, and the office of Treasurer, which was replaced with that of cashier.[143] The Commissioners also secured a reduction in the salary of the Chief Secretary. Of Sir Fredrick Hankey, the holder of this office, little needs to be said further. His unpopularity in Malta was almost general.[144] The Commissioners too, despite their earlier favourable view, came to consider him as the chief obstacle to reform in Malta. They, therefore, strongly recommended that he be retired on a pension as soon as possible.[145] Ironically, Hankey had some years earlier sought to retire because of his wife's ill-health but his request was turned down on the grounds that the Maltese government could not afford to pay him a pension and that his service in Ceylon could not be added to that of Malta.[146]

The approach adopted by the Commissioners to the Charitable Establishments of the Maltese government mirrored in many ways that which had been adopted in Britain with respect to poor relief. It was an approach that had its roots in Bentham's utilitarian doctrine and Malthusian and Richardian economics, and which had been given practical expression in the 1830s by Nicholls, Senior, Chadwick and Frankland Lewis (the father of George Cornwall Lewis), through the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834.[147] The arguments which held currency in Britain at the time may be briefly stated thus. First, that the whole system of out-door relief of the poor had become an intolerable financial burden on the resources of the country. Second, that the existing system of out-door relief did not distinguish

between those actually destitute, because of age or infirmity, and those who were poor, i.e. those forced to work for their own subsistence, and had served only to augment the number of wilful paupers. It was said that out-door relief had taken from able-bodied persons the fear of hunger which normally acted as a stimulus and which kept them industrious, with the consequence, that many found it preferable to be maintained by the labour of other than their own.[148]

Both of these evils Austin and Lewis claimed to have also found present in Malta. As evidence, the Commissioners quoted from the Report of Mr Thornton, the Auditor-General in Malta, which showed that between 1830 and 1836 the expenditure of the Government Charitable Establishments had increased by about 26 per cent to just under £18,000 or about one-sixth of all government expenditure.[149] He pointed out that 'this increase of charge...has impaired the resources of the local treasury for the general service of the Government' and that urgent action was needed

'to prevent the necessity of recourse being had to His Majesty's Treasury, in order to make good any deficiency in those means which may result from such cause.'[150]

Similarly, according to Austin and Lewis, 'the distribution of Government alms' in Malta was 'liable to the principal objections which have been justly made to out-door relief of the poor in England' and the

'discipline of the [local] Ospizio is not sufficient to deter all but the most necessitous, and it cannot be considered that able-bodied girls, [i.e. those of the House of Industry]...rank high among the objects of a limited public provision for the destitute.'[151]

The remedies proposed by the Commissioners were identical to those which had been proposed by the Poor Law Commission in Britain, namely less eligibility, the institutional test, and the centralisation and uniformity in the administration of poor relief. First, since in Malta, more so than in Britain, the government was not in a position to relieve all indigent poor, it was 'manifestly desirable that the government should relieve those who are most indigent.'[152] Second, they proposed that all out-door relief should be stopped and that all the physical needs of the destitute be

provided for in asylums extended for the purpose. However, it was necessary 'to remove from their [asylums] condition all those indulgencies which may be attractive to persons not in a state of destitution, and which would have the invidious effect of securing to paupers maintained by the state on the plea of destitution, a larger share of comforts than is enjoyed by many of those who contribute to their maintenance.'[153]

Hence, those attracted to these institutions were to be persons who would otherwise starve if they stayed away. Finally, Lewis and Austin recommended that all government charities in Malta should be placed under the management of one board. This was, to a point, the system which Maitland had adopted in 1816.[154] But Lord Hastings had departed from this system, unnecessarily in the view of the Commissioners, when he placed the Foundling Hospital and the House of Industry, which he had set up in 1824, under a separate committee from that responsible for the Charitable Establishments.[155]

Lord Glenelg expressed his entire satisfaction with the report of the Commissioners on the Malta Government Charities, both for its 'brevity and clearness' and on its 'foresight and perspicuity.'[156] Governor Bouverie was instructed to act on their recommendations provided that he did this with caution in order to avoid giving 'a reasonable cause of complaint' and because of 'some conclusive objection which has escaped the research of the Commissioners' but which might occur to him in the process of implementing them.[157] Once again, as in the case of grain provision, the Maltese were being forced to come to terms with another diminution in the responsibilities of government. Indeed, as Price observed, the Maltese were being told that from now on they must work their own salvation without depending, as past government policy had accustomed them to do, on state intervention.[158]

But if the intent of the Commissioners was to restrict state intervention in several areas of Maltese life, in the area of education the government was chastised for having done so little. This was not as contradictory as it may appear. Their intention was to do away with popular

dependence on the state and to infuse self-help, the concept on which all liberal aspirations were based. But self-help could not be attained without education. Austin and Lewis believed that a wider diffusion of education in Malta would serve to inculcate this virtue in a people who demonstrated that they possessed potential and talent.[159] It was a belief that was shared by Lord Glenelg who, in his instructions to Austin and Lewis, had expressed the view that 'the diffusion of sound knowledge amongst the people of Malta would tend to improve their condition', and eventually 'to strengthen their attachment to the British Crown.'[160] The Commissioners were to inquire, therefore,

'whether the object in question could possibly be promoted by any, and what, interference on the part of His Majesty's Government.'[161]

The plan for the reform of education submitted by the Commissioners, which was approved by the Secretary of State in its entirety, was remarkable in two ways. First, it went against current British practice in education which encouraged voluntary provision of education. They recommended, in contrast, that government should shoulder all administrative and financial responsibility for education in Malta. Second, by recommending that the direction of state education should be entrusted to the Rector of the University of Studies, and as a result an embryonic Department of Education was therefore conceived.

State education in the Maltese islands consisted, in 1838, of the University of Studies, the Lyceum, (a higher school attached to the University), and three elementary schools. The latter had been, until then, attached to the Charitable Establishments.[162] Private education consisted of the Bishop's seminary and a small school in one of the outlying villages.[163] The University granted degrees in theology, law and medicine and apart from a small income from property endowments and student fees its finances came directly from the Government.[164]

According to Austin and Lewis the courses at the University left much to be desired while elementary education was 'small in quantity and bad in

quality'.[165] The main problem with the University was that the salaries paid by the government to university professors were so low that most found it virtually impossible to make their academic situation a primary object of their attention.[166] The existing number of elementary schools, confined as they were to the towns, were ineffective in reducing the level of illiteracy which the Commissioners estimated at around 80%.[167] Furthermore, at every level, the quality of education was handicapped by the difficulty of finding properly qualified teachers.[168]

The Commissioners firmly believed, as has already been observed, that the future well-being of the Maltese, be it social, economic or political depended entirely on a wider and more popular diffusion of education. For example, they wished to see the creation of a chair in Political Economy, with lectures in the subject being held in the evening so that interested members of the public may be able to attend. They hoped that the teaching of this discipline would in time help to dispel many of the prejudices existing among the population, especially those relating to the proper role of government in the economy, and to create 'a barrier of enlightened opinion, hard or impossible to surmount'[169] by a future government intent to commit the same 'gross errors in its financial, commercial, or other economical policy,'[170] as past governments had done. These 'gross errors', according to Austin and Lewis, included placing needless obstacles to general commerce; indiscriminate public charity to paupers of the lower classes; and the conversion of public offices into receptacles for paupers of the higher orders.

Because of the latter danger, the Commissioners did not wish to see an expansion in the number of students attending the University. The number of professional graduates already exceeded the demand for them and their difficulty in gaining a living had induced the government, in a vain effort to prevent them from joining the ranks of its critics, 'to introduce the pernicious system of creating useless offices.'[171] What the Commissioners

did wish to see, however, was the extension of elementary education to every town and village in the Maltese islands. But this required resources which only the government was in a position to provide. Indeed, although the Commissioners declared their opposition to gratuitous instruction, supporting a small increase in the fees charged by the university, the general poverty of the Maltese led them to propose that all elementary education in Malta should be free, all expenses being borne by the government. Similarly, the Commissioners felt that the government should remedy the problem of a lack of properly qualified teachers by the grant of periodic overseas scholarships to students who had graduated with distinction from the university.[172]

Finally, the Commissioners recommended that control over these as well as over every other establishment directly or indirectly connected with education, such as the Public Library and the Government Botanical Garden should be vested in the Rector of the University. He was to be responsible for their direction and for setting down the curriculum to be followed in each of these institutions. This, however, did not imply that the university or schools were to enjoy administrative autonomy. Before any rule or change in curriculum could come into effect it had to be approved by the Governor himself. But despite this limitation the recommendation of the Commissioners served to break the old pattern whereby elementary schooling was considered as a charitable undertaking and although the idea of creating a Department of Education had not as yet emerged it was to prove but a small step to its creation in the 1850s.[173]

The Commission, however, was brought to a sudden end in July 1838 by Lord Russell who had replaced Glenelg at the Colonial Office.[174] Glenelg was ousted from office mainly because of the crisis in Canada but the long duration of the Commission and his readiness to make concession to the Maltese, especially those which undermined British patronage, had added to his difficulties.[175] Sarah Austin wrote, soon after her return to

England, that 'Lord Glenelg's virtue' was that he was prepared to disoblige and offend

'at least a dozen old friends, powerful supporters or colleagues, merely to do an act of justice to Malta, which nobody will appreciate.' [176]

Glenelg himself remained convinced that what had been conceded to the Maltese was fully justified by the case of Malta. He declared in the Lords that if the whole of the Commissioners work had centred solely on the issue of putting Maltese in executive positions, then 'quite sufficient would be proved to justify the appointment of this Commission.' [177] It was indeed a remarkable development when compared to the state of things in the rest of the Empire for during this period similar developments were mainly confined to the Canadian Civil Service. [178] While in Canada the filling of executive offices by Canadians was taking place as a result of the greater autonomy being conceded to that country, in Malta such a policy was being adopted in spite of the fact that the island's government was to remain autocratic. [179]

Lewis and the Austins were also satisfied with their contribution to reform in Malta. Before his departure from Malta, Lewis wrote that,

'on the whole the British Government [had] behaved very well with respect to Malta. There were two great obstacles to overcome, viz indifference about so small an object, and interest in maintaining numerous jobs, and abuses, and blunders.' [180]

It was his view that the Inquiry did not simply 'concern the government of 120,000 people' but also 'the moral influence of England...and...her character for good faith,' throughout the Mediterranean. [181] John Austin was satisfied that the vast majority of their recommendations had been adopted, as well as with his connection with Glenelg and James Stephen, for both of whom he entertained sincere respect. [182] His wife Sarah was equally pleased with the fact that by the time of their abrupt departure from Malta she had assisted in the setting up of ten new government village schools on the island. [183]

#### AFTER THE COMMISSION

The success or failure of the Commission could only be properly gauged with the passage of time. (See Diagram 6:1). Undoubtedly, the most important reform to emerge from the Commission of 1836 was the opening of executive offices to Maltese merit. But this policy was severely tested in 1841 when the office of Superintendent of Public Works became vacant. In line with previous instructions from the Colonial Office during Lord Glenelg's tenure, Bouverie appointed Mr Xerri, a Maltese and submitted his name for confirmation.[184] However, on learning of the vacancy, Lord Russell appointed to the post Mr Arrowsmith, who resided in Britain.[185] Bouverie informed the Secretary of State of the dismay that the news of the appointment had caused in Malta, and reminded him of the recommendations of the Commissioners and the declarations of his predecessor that, before a stranger was appointed to an office in Malta, the claims of Maltese subordinates will be attentively considered. Stephen at the Colonial Office minuted that the appointment was

'...regarded, not only by the Maltese but by Sir H. Bouverie himself as a breach of faith, (however unintentional) to the people of the island.'[186]

It was an embarrassing situation. If the Secretary of State retracted from his appointment of Arrowsmith, his action was bound to be interpreted in Malta as a statement of official policy, permanently restricting offices in Malta to Maltese. Not even Glenelg had been prepared to go that far. In a fortress of importance, as in the case of Malta, it was considered unwise that HM's Government should give such a pledge, for future circumstances may demand departure from it.[187]

Lord Russell felt that it was important that this principle should be reaffirmed, but he wished to do this without embarrassing the governor. A way out was to make the whole matter appear a misunderstanding. 'State to Sir H. Bouverie', Russell minuted to Stephen,

'that I made the appointment in the belief that he had not found any person either English or Maltese qualified for the situation. That the recommendation of the Commissioners cannot be presumed to bind the Crown to



## Changes following the Report of the Commission of 1836-38

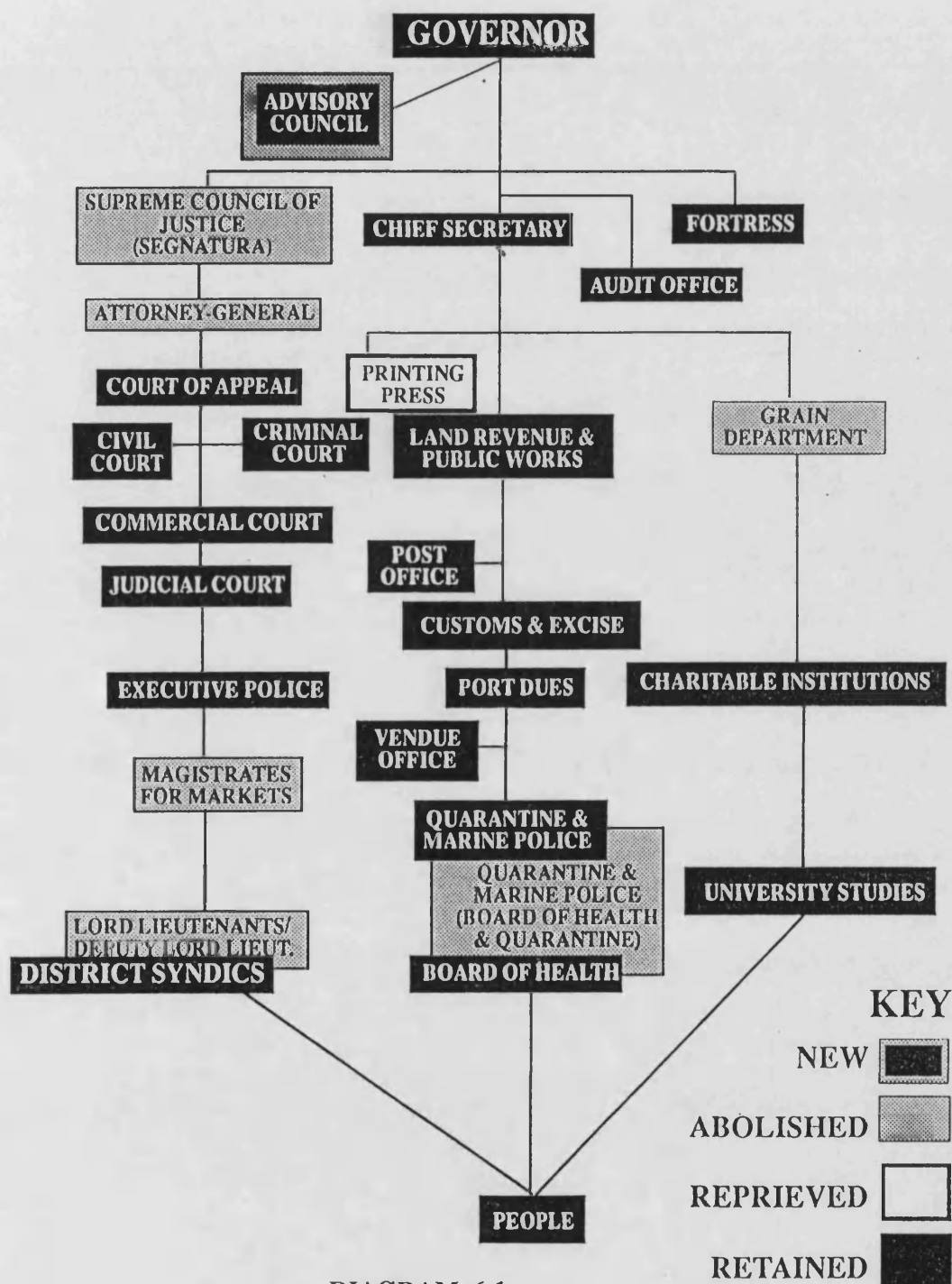


DIAGRAM 6:1

appoint persons to situations for which they are not qualified because they are Maltese...[and] that I cannot cancel an appointment already made of a person whose qualifications have been favourably reported on...'[188]

On this, Russell enjoyed the support of his subordinates who were also opposed to a policy which restricted civil offices in a colony to persons native or resident in that colony. They firmly held that in small societies

'some of the offices of most importance should be filled up by persons from a distance, not connected with any of the small knots and cliques into which such societies usually become divided,'

for this tended 'to mitigate the bitterness of that party spirit which is so often their bane...'[189]

Russell's readiness to resort to patronage was quickly complemented by Bouverie who proposed to put asunder what the Commissioners only recently had brought together. He proposed that the Department of Land Revenue be once again divided into two departments, i.e. that of Land Revenue and that of Public Works. This measure would have had the effect of elevating Arrowsmith to the Headship of a Department instead of that of a branch and would have almost naturally involved an increase in salary. Lord Stanley, who in the meantime had replaced Russell as Colonial Secretary, was reluctant to sanction this measure and did so only as an experiment, 'for a limited time' and on condition that a full report was made to him regarding its outcome.[190] He would not, however, grant Arrowsmith an increase in salary until a decision - not favourable as it turned out - had been taken regarding the success of the experiment.[191]

After this case, however, the appointment of non-resident British officials to the Maltese public service declined, although the offices of Chief Secretary, of Auditor-General, of Assistant Secretary and intermittently that of Head of Police continued to be held by British nationals.[192] In time, as we shall see in the following chapters, the recommendation of the Commissioners was to provide the basis on which a proper Maltese civil service could be established.

The Commissioners had hoped that the Maltese economy would show a

marked improvement because of the adoption of their new system of tariffs and duties. Although in the 1840s Malta did succeed in attracting a larger share of the transit trade of the Mediterranean, its impact remained marginal. Indeed, the Maltese economy or what was left of it remained in its old depressed state[193].

Some improvement in the social condition of the Maltese did take place, mainly in the harbour areas, but this improvement was the result of a marked increase in naval activity and the building of the first naval dockyard in Malta rather than because of an increase in trade or industry.[194] The Admiralty's conversion to steam powered vessels in the 1830s and improved communication with India through the Mediterranean was, for a time, to transform the island into an important coal bunkering station, while the commissioning of the dockyard in the early 1840s was to provide new openings for Maltese skilled labour.[195] It was from this time onwards that the fortress was to gradually become a principal contributor to employment in Malta and the principal mainstay of the Maltese economy. In time it was to rival and outstrip the Maltese public service as the major employer in Malta.[196]

The Commissioners had also hoped that the principle had been firmly asserted in Malta that it was not the business of government to take a lead in civil affairs or make themselves responsible for solving redundancy and distress.[197] Events, especially two severe droughts in less than six years, however, soon proved otherwise. The suffering of the country people, who had not benefitted greatly from the increase of activity taking place in the harbour areas, was soon made worse by a great scarcity of grain throughout the Mediterranean which pushed the price of bread beyond their means. First Bouverie, and later Patrick Stuart, his successor as Governor, were constrained to intervene. Bouverie, despite Treasury objections, embarked on a scheme to improve the water supply of Valletta and of the Three Cities.[198] Under Stuart there was a return to out-door relief and

in 1844, to mitigate some of the hardship existing in the countryside, the Governor granted

'an immediate abatement on the rent of the Government Farms (the government being the largest landowner),...for the last year, to the amount of 25 per cent in some cases and of 30 per cent in others.'[199]

Three years later 'owing to the continued high price of bread' and in an effort to stem the rising discontent against his administration, because of his refusal to intervene in the grain market, Stuart instituted a programme of public works as a way of affording the people relief.[200] Thus, by 1847, dependence on the government, especially among the inhabitants of the countryside, had reasserted itself while in the towns and harbour areas this dependence had been somewhat mitigated by imperial defence expenditure.

Maltese political leaders had remained steadfast in their belief that the remedy for Malta's social and economic problems lay in the institution of representative government. Some of the hostile attacks on Britain and the local government, in some of the newly established local newspapers, already demonstrated this.[201] Ironically, British reaction to these attacks served only to demonstrate the extent of the dependence of the local political leadership on the government. Three of the editors of these newspapers were university professors and as such employees of the government, and included amongst them Dr Sciortino who held the Chair of Political Economy. In 1841 Bouverie adopted the position that these editors 'ought to qualify themselves to abuse the Government by resigning their employment.'[202] The Colonial Secretary, the Tory Lord Stanley agreed, instructing Bouverie

'to intimate to these Editors...the consequence which may follow a continuance of the inflammatory language of the papers which they avowedly conduct.'[203]

Things finally came to a head under Stuart, first with the expulsion of Sciortino from his post of university professor and later with the suppression of the Chair of Political Economy.[204] Austin and Lewis had

considered Sciortino as the ablest lawyer in Malta while they had vested great hopes on the benefits for Malta of the teaching of political economy at the University of Malta.[205]

Finally, the Maltese leaders had been disappointed too that their demand for the appointment of a civil governor had also been rejected. The Maltese had consistently maintained since 1800 that military governors were unable, because of their military duties, to give sufficient attention to civil matters, with the consequence that too much discretion was allowed to public servants who, imbued with power, sought their own interest instead of that of the people.[206] This issue was raised again in 1843 by Camillo Sceberras who alleged that Governor Bouverie was totally impotent to carry out his policies because of the existence of a 'camarilla' in the higher offices of the service. Sceberras alleged that this clique had its base in the Chief Secretary's Office and that of the Crown Advocate and that its aim was

'in so surrounding the Governor that he may invariably be led to sanction such measures as are agreeable to them, and such as may preserve the influence of their power...'[207]

Bouverie denied this arguing, that while Sceberras was an honest person and a patriot he suffered from too vivid an imagination.[208]

But whether the latter was the case or not at the time, this issue was to receive some support in the next decade when Earl Grey, Lord Stanley's successor at the Colonial Office, felt that the time had come to concede Maltese demands for the appointment of a civil governor and for a reform of the existing constitution. We shall see in the following Chapter that as a consequence of these political reforms the period 1849-1858 was to be one in which the public service was to experience some of its most positive reforms, including the introduction of competitive examinations for entry to the Maltese Civil Service.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE IMPACT OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM: 1846-1858

It has been argued, notably by Cohen and by Parris, that the main motivating influences behind important civil service reforms in nineteenth century Britain were political and constitutional. Cohen notes, for example, that the process by which public officers were transformed into civil servants was a political process, initiated around 1780 by Parliament and concluded, again by Parliament, in 1816 by virtue of a Bill which transferred to the latter responsibility for voting the salaries of those employed in public offices. Henceforth, those employed in the various departments were no longer to be considered as quasi-personal servants of the Ministers in whose offices they served, but servants of the Crown.[1] Parris argues that, in 19th century Britain, political officials became more distinguishable from non-political officials, chiefly because political officials were becoming more accountable or responsible and, therefore, more liable to removal, while non-political officials were becoming more permanent.[2] In the period examined in this Chapter Two rather important political and constitutional reforms, i.e. the appointment of a civil governor (1847) and the grant of a new Council of Government with an elected minority (1849), were also to exert influence on future developments in the Maltese public service. Indeed, two developments, which may be said to be the result of these reforms, were the introduction of competitive entry examinations for clerks and the formal recognition of bureaucratic influence in the political process. These two aspects provide, in fact, the two principal themes of this Chapter.

#### POLITICAL REFORM

In Malta, as already observed, the fortress presented the most serious obstacle to political reform. Indeed, until, 1847, it was still argued that 'the maintenance of the power and influence of His Majesty's Government throughout the Mediterranean depends upon the security of the Fortress of

Malta. The government of the fortress should therefore be essentially military.'[3]

But Earl Grey, who in 1846 assumed the office of Colonial Secretary, no longer considered this arrangement satisfactory, especially when he took into account 'the uneasiness and dissatisfaction, if not positive discontent'[4] that existed in Malta. In June 1847 the resignation of the unpopular Patrick Stuart as governor of Malta gave Grey the opportunity of pressing the matter upon Russell, his Prime Minister. 'The management of the garrison', he told him

'is quite business enough for the General Officer in Command of the Troops, and besides I do not know where to find a General Officer possessing that knowledge of the principles of legislation and of government which I consider to be indispensable in the person who is to administer the civil affairs'

of Malta.[5] After all, as Grey himself admitted,

'Malta, besides being a garrison and naval station, also contains a considerable and increasing population; its civil government is, therefore, a subject of importance.'[6]

He proposed, therefore, that

'in order that the Governor may be enabled to devote a larger share of time and attention to the civil affairs of the Island',[7]

to place civil and military matters under separate and distinct authorities. Having late in 1847 gained his point, Grey proceeded to appoint Patrick More O'Ferrall first civil governor of Malta.[8]

In 1849, less than two years after this concession Grey, urged by More O'Ferrall, agreed to reform the existing Constitution of Malta by the creation of a new, partially elected, Council of Government. In 1835, Malta was granted a nominated Council of Government consisting of four official and three unofficial members and until 1849 this seemed to be the maximum that Britain was prepared to concede. Because of its advisory character, however, the Council was generally regarded by the Maltese with indifference and by some, even with contempt.[9] Consequently, agitation for representative government remained a consistent feature of political affairs in Malta. In 1848, constitutional reform in Sicily and other



Italian states[10] added to this agitation and the pressures on Britain to concede political reform in Malta became almost irresistible. The question was how to preserve overall British authority in Malta while, at the same time, giving the Maltese a hitherto unknown degree of political participation in the affairs of their islands. For a time Grey toyed with the idea of setting-up municipal institutions in Malta and when in 1847 it became necessary, because of his old age, to replace the Chief Secretary in the island,[11] Grey instructed the new appointee, Henry Lushington, to proceed to Malta by way of Italy and to send home a report regarding the workings of municipal bodies there.[12]

Lushington's report, however, dismissed the applicability of municipal councils to Malta. Because of its small size, he observed, '...in Malta the tendency of everything, morally and materially, is towards the government.'[13] Municipal bodies would, if established, transform 'natural unity into artificial division.'[14] O'Ferrall, the new civil governor agreed, arguing further that, unless the elective principle was conceded, these institutions will be treated with the same indifference and contempt with which the Council of Government had been treated from its inception.[15] In 1849 Grey finally agreed to the establishment in Malta of a new Council of Government. It was to consist of eighteen members, of whom ten were to be government officials, and were to include the Governor as President, and eight unofficial members, who were to be elected on the basis of a franchise limited by literacy and property qualifications.[16] It is interesting to note, as Wight has done, that of the colonies which in 1849 had not yet attained representative government and in which the Crown still held the power to legislate directly, it was in Malta that the principle of elective representation first appeared.[17] It was Grey who insisted on the need for an official majority on the Council. It was necessary in his view, and given Malta's strategic importance, that the executive authority of the Governor should be preserved 'by every fair and

honest means'[18] and that the Governor in the new Council should, at all times, be able to rely on the support of a majority of officials. In practice, what the Maltese were being offered was participatory representation rather than control over domestic affairs. With a majority of officials to support them, Governors could always carry their measures or defeat those of the elected minority. Use, by Governors, of the "official majority" was, as we shall see in the following Chapters, to become one of the main stumbling blocks in the relationship between government and elected members. Power, hence, remained vested with the Government. Neither O'Ferrall nor Reid, his successor, made use of their official majority for such purposes. Even so, the Constitution of 1849 was to enhance bureaucratic influence over the decision making process in Malta. It is a theme which will be examined in greater detail later. It is sufficient to note at this stage that it was this fact which, more than any other, impressed on More O'Ferrall, and later on Reid, his successor, the necessity of limiting, as much as possible, the hold of bureaucrats over government policy and of attracting to the service the best available candidates.

The question of recruitment first began to acquire importance after the adoption, in 1838, of the recommendation by Austin and Lewis that, henceforth, and with very few exceptions, offices in the Maltese public service were to be occupied mainly by Maltese. This measure had the effect of placing the local civil service almost on a par with that of Canada and of other colonies which enjoyed representative government, in the sense that, in practice, patronage over most appointments was transferred from the Secretary of State in London to the Governor in Malta.[19] Although most appointments had to be confirmed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies,[20] the latter knew very little about the qualities of those nominated and had to trust the judgement of the Governor. But the appointment of a civil governor and the grant of the 1849 Constitution were

to make the issue of recruitment more urgent and we shall see below that Malta was, by 1857, to follow India and Britain in adopting a system of examinations as the principal method for entry into the local civil service.

#### CIVIL GOVERNMENT AND RECRUITMENT

On his arrival in Malta Patrick More O'Ferrall was given a rousing welcome by the inhabitants. The new Governor - a civilian - apart from being an experienced politician and administrator,[21] had the distinction of being Irish and Catholic. By means of his appointment Grey wished to

'afford to the Maltese people a practical proof that religious opinions are no disqualification from offices of great trust and importance.'[22]

However, his term as Governor was to fall quite short of the six years which governors were expected to serve for he resigned his office in 1851.[23] Nevertheless, he displayed enormous foresight in tackling the social, economic and political-administrative problems of Malta.

More O'Ferrall was of the view that the main problem which had to be addressed in Malta was that of Maltese dependence for everything on the government, a problem which in his view had its roots at the time of the Order of St John.[24] Yet, the Governor was perceptive enough to recognise, that the roots of Maltese dependence on the government were not simply historical, but mainly economic in character. It was, therefore, at this level that the problem had to be addressed. But as the liberal economist, William Nassau Senior observed while on a visit to Malta, private exertion on its own was not enough. In Malta the role of the government was imperative.[25] Senior stated his case thus:

'It may be said...that the Government is the great landed proprietor: that its territorial revenue is equal to that of twenty-eight families of £1,000 a year each, that therefore it ought not to act like a government supported only by taxes, and confine itself to its strict duties of protecting its subjects from violence and fraud, but also to perform some of the services of imperfect obligation which are expected from a landed aristocracy.'[26]

It would seem that the Governor was well aware of this fact for the improvement of the infrastructure of the country was his first priority.

Excellent harbours and strategic location at the centre of the Mediterranean were the only assets which Malta possessed and it was around these two that the Governor's economic plans revolved. O'Ferrall's intention was to make Malta a centre for transshipment activities and for this reason his first measures involved the improvement of the commercial port, a reduction in the period of quarantine for vessels coming from the Levant, and an extension to the existing facilities for shipbuilding and repair.[27] He constructed buildings to serve as warehouses and as bonded stores, and greatly extended the facilities for grain storage, seeking to have Malta replace the ports of Leghorn and Genoa as the centre for the corn trade of the Mediterranean. In this he was particularly successful for within a year of taking office the value of grain re-exported from Malta had risen from £180,000 in 1847 to £450,000 in 1848.[28] He hoped too, by this measure, to ensure that in the event of a sudden war Malta would be fully provisioned, thereby removing

'the apprehension caused by the measures of the Commissioners of Inquiry, who put an end to the old system of monopoly of grain in the hands of the Government...'[29]

With a view to encouraging the formation of a stronger and more cohesive commercial community, More O'Ferrall also managed to bring together, in one officially recognised Chamber of Commerce, the two separate organisations of Maltese and British merchants.[30] The Governor also saw to the improvement of the roads leading to the country and he could report that after two years 'every village of the Island' had been opened 'to wheel-carriage transport.'[31]

More O'Ferrall's next target was the administration, and important reforms were carried out in the administration of Crown property, the Charitable Institutions, and education. He found that, notwithstanding repeated instructions from London,

'the house property of the Crown in Valletta was jobbed to a degree rarely witnessed under any Government.'[32]

He directed that a new revaluation should be made and although he claimed

that the new valuation was 30% below the real value, he estimated that it will add £4,000 annually to the revenue.[33] However, this measure proved extremely unpopular and it was not implemented until two years later, in 1851.[34] The Governor's conception of public charity was similar to that of the Commissioners of 1836, that is, that government charities should be strictly limited to those most in need and that those housed in charitable institutions must, if capable of so doing, contribute through their labour towards the expense of their upkeep.[35] It was his view that the House of Industry for girls, at Floriana, did not fulfil these criteria but he found that he could not abolish it for its original funds had been privately donated for this purpose.[36] His proposal that all girls who were

'above the age of sixteen should be sent out to earn their bread...excited such an outcry',[37]

however, that the Governor was forced to adopt a different strategy. He offered those who chose to leave the asylum the

'same sum they cost in the house; placing those who refused in a separate building, obliging them to wash and work for all the public establishments without pay.'[38]

The building to which the latter were transferred was also to house an industrial school 'to which the children of the poor' were 'to be admitted as day scholars', the governor hoping in the process to destroy 'the seclusion which was the principal evil of the establishment.'[39]

The building which had housed the House of Industry at Floriana became the new civil hospital.[40] On a visit to the old hospital O'Ferrall had come away convinced that abuses existed in its administration. To rectify matters he appointed Dr Collings, an English doctor who had received his education at the University of Malta and who could also speak Maltese and Italian fluently,[41] as Inspector of Hospitals.[42] The medical service was sensibly improved. The hospitals of Floriana, Mdina and Gozo were enlarged while twenty-one dispensaries, established throughout Malta and Gozo, extended medical relief and vaccination to the poor in the country

districts.[43] In 1851 the Governor reported that over 68,000 persons had received medical relief in the two years ending in December 1850 as compared with 22,780 in the two years preceding January 1849.[44]

According to More O'Ferrall the education reforms of the Commissioners had failed and he suggested two reasons for this. First, despite the fact that the number of elementary schools had risen to eighteen, the labouring poor, for whom the schools were intended, had failed to send their children in sufficient numbers.[45] Second, some of the measures adopted by former Governors, including their support of an infant school which conducted its prayers in English and in the Protestant form, made the Maltese suspect of British plans to protestantize them.[46] But the desire for education existed and although the governor preferred 'that the Government should be looked on as protector rather than promoter',[47] to conciliate the church in Malta he sent a young priest, Canon Pullicino, to study at Dublin the Irish system of instruction hoping, on the latter's return, to entrust to his charge control over public education.[48]

While carrying out these reforms More O'Ferrall grew in the conviction that greater supervision was required over the administration, that the morale of the service had to be improved, and that those desiring to enter the service be of proven ability. To satisfy the first requirement O'Ferrall undertook two measures. In the first instance he put an end to the system whereby each department was permitted to make its own contracts, a system which in his view encouraged speculation. Instead, in December 1848 he established the Office of Comptroller of Civil Contracts and all government contracts had to be concluded through this office.[49] Secondly, he concentrated all government offices in one large building. In the heart of the building he created a record-room where all the records of the administration, past and current, were to be held under the care of a notary. These arrangements were intended to make control and supervision of the administration by the Chief Secretary and the Auditor-General more

effective.[50]

The morale of the service, especially of the lower ranks, was being undermined, according to the Governor, by the practice whereby

'persons advanced in life, and who had failed in other pursuits, have been placed above those who had long and efficiently laboured in the public service'[51]

blunting their chances of promotion in the process. But this was not taking place in defiance of some rule or instruction from the Secretary of State. With few exceptions, such as those of Chief Secretary and Auditor-General, Governors were free to appoint to the service any person whom they thought would best carry out the duties of the office. Thus, when a vacancy arose the Governor could fill that vacancy either by promotion from within the service itself or by appointment from outside. In both cases the Governor was responsible for the selection of the candidates and their age was not a restriction. In Malta, however, the number of claimants for offices ran into thousands every year and many may have been appointed even when vacancies did not exist.[52] To minimise the risk of abuse, as already observed, most appointments had to be confirmed by the Secretary of State. In 1846, for example, Grey had reproached Patrick Stuart for making appointments without any reference to the Colonial Office and refused to sanction them until he had been furnished with a full explanation.[53] A second check against abuse was the requirement that Governors should in their annual reports inform the Colonial Office of persons who in their opinion were suited by character and ability for future employment in the civil service of the colony. It was hoped by this rule to make sure that when vacancies arose the Colonial Office already possessed some information on would-be candidates for the vacancy and no candidate for appointment was sprung on them by surprise.

More O'Ferrall held that these safeguards were not enough. He proposed, therefore, that the ages of those entering the service should be fixed and that promotion should be made on the basis of seniority, provided

the person was qualified. Until then, entry to the service was wholly unregulated. The Governor felt that the entrants to the service should be between twenty and thirty years old.[54] Merivale, who had replaced James Stephens as permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, thought the matter should be left to the discretion of the Governor but added that

‘probably he [Governor] wishes himself to have that discretion finished, as a means of lessening the numerous claims that must be made on him.’[55]

Grey thought that limiting the ages of candidates to the public service was, however, ‘necessary to keep down the charge for superannuation.’[56]

The Governor also wished to see his own discretion, and probably that of his successors, restricted by a rule which made seniority the general criteria for promotion, although the Governor wished to retain the power to dispense with this rule reporting his reasons for doing so to the Secretary of State for his sanction. Furthermore, he proposed that the governor was to be allowed to appoint any member of the public service as Head of Department but, ‘if the necessity of the case shall require such a departure from the general rule’, to recommend to the Secretary of State ‘a person not hitherto in the public service.’[57] Seniority was meant to be a safeguard and, seen in the context of small island politics, an important one for it sought to ensure that public servants who performed their duties efficiently and diligently were not, for improper reasons, passed over when their turn for promotion came round. In theory, promotions were granted on department by department basis up to the level of Chief Clerk and on the recommendation of the Governor, subject to the approval of the Secretary of State, for offices above that level.

Abuses did exist. An excellent example was the appointment of Sedley, the son of a former Chief Secretary, first as a clerk and later as Head of Police. Sedley was fitted neither by nature nor character to hold these offices. He suffered from a speech impediment and had the habit of running up debts with almost every commerical establishment in Valletta.[58] Yet, he was promoted over the head of another officer who, for seventeen years,



had served as deputy head of Police.[59] More O'Ferrall's desire to establish rules for the purpose may be indicative of other equally serious cases to which he was privy. Making promotion by seniority the norm would have eventually ensured that any public servant, provided he was efficient and deserving, was duly promoted when his turn came round. Was he to be passed over in defiance of the rule he would then be free to appeal to the Secretary of State to have his case reviewed. In this way the Governor probably hoped that, as all members of the service came to feel that they would be dealt with fairly, morale in the public service, and eventually efficiency, would greatly improve. Grey was not, however, so understanding on this occasion and did not approve that seniority should be established as the main criteria for promotion. 'Promotion should' he minuted,

'as in the best managed of the public departments at home, be by selection from one class to another, the service being divided into classes and no person being allowed to make two steps at once unless under very special circumstances.'[60]

Classes, however, did not as yet exist in the Maltese public service.

Finally, the Governor proposed

'that all young persons claiming to enter the principal departments...should be subject to an examination.'[61]

It was a novel suggestion since the notion of recruitment by means of examinations had hardly made much impact at this time and, being made in 1848, it came a full six years before the same proposal was made in the Northcote-Trevelyan Report.[62] But an attempt to introduce examinations as a method of entry into the Civil Service of the East India Company had already been made in 1833. Macaulay had suggested that four candidates were to be nominated for every vacancy and a competitive examination was to be held to decide which of the candidates was best suited for appointment. This scheme, however, lasted only one year and competition did not become established until 1853.[63] There was, in Britain, great resistance to the suggestion made by Northcote and Trevelyan in 1854, that entry into the Civil Service should be by open competitive examination. Indeed, although

limited competition, that is, nomination followed by competitive examination, was introduced by some departments in 1855 it was not until 1870 that open competition became established as the principal means of entry into the service.[64]

It is interesting to observe, however, that neither Merivale, the Under-Secretary, nor Grey the Colonial Secretary, ventured an opinion or comment on O'Ferrall's proposal to introduce a system of competitive examinations. According to Merivale all the rules submitted by the Governor were of a reasonable character except that of limiting the ages of entrants. Grey in contrast wished that 'the rules he [Governor] suggests may in future be observed by the Government'[65] with the exception of that on seniority. It would seem that these two officials had as yet, in 1848, no opinion whatsoever on this issue. Neither did O'Ferrall ever press it forward again during his tenure nor did he try to carry it into effect although the reasons for this remain obscure.

It was William Reid, O'Ferrall's successor as civil governor, who in 1857, (almost a decade later), introduced competition as the principal method of entry into the Maltese civil service. The reasons for his action were not dissimilar from those which prompted his predecessor to propose the measure. First, Reid was concerned with the kind of recruits attracted to the service. 'One of our great misfortunes' Reid was recorded to have said,

'...is the number of young men who have received what they suppose to be a learned education, who are without fortune, and for whom there is no room in professions.'[66]

Their time was spent in

'coffee-houses, talking local politics, and planning liberal constitutions for the independent republic of Malta...'[67]

One claimant for office was said to have replied, when asked by Reid what his profession was, that he was a politician.[68] Furthermore, there was no reason for the Governor to believe that they were sufficiently qualified for the public service. Reid stated that, when confronted with the

examination papers of the East India Company, claimants for office had retorted in horror that 'no Maltese could answer such questions.'[69] These, lamented the Governor, 'are the candidates for our public service.'[70] But to refuse employment to these young Maltese tended also to have negative consequences. They tended, on the one hand, to make good material through whom all forms of political agitation could be conducted. On the other hand, rejection also had the effect of depressing education for it prevented the general public from seeing in education an important avenue to secure employment.

Second, the Governor was constantly being flooded with petitions from parents of young men, or from the latter themselves, for offices of every kind in the public service.[71] Reid reported that, in the first ten months of 1857, he had received 1,163 of such petitions despite the fact that entrance to the service had, since February of that year, become dependent on competitive examinations.[72]

Reid himself pointed to a third and particularly more important reason why he felt it necessary to adopt a system of competition. It arose directly from the grant, under the Constitution of 1849, of a Council of Government composed, as I have indicated earlier, partly of official members, mainly Heads of Departments, and partly of elected members. The Governor had arrived at the view that

'since Elective Members have been admitted to seats in the Council...it has become necessary that official members should be men of ability, able to discuss questions brought before the Council as a Legislative Body...' [73]

It was indeed a very important point, for, as we shall see in this and other Chapters, by virtue of their majority on the Council public servants possessed the power, if they wished to exercise it, to pass every measure they desired and to defeat those, however sensible or reasonable, proposed by the elected members.

The first examination for clerkships in the public service was announced in the Government Gazette of February 1857[74] and held in March

of the same year. Two more were later held, one in May and one in November 1857. The examinations were held under the control of a Board appointed by the Governor which included the Rector of the University as President, the Inspector of Charitable Institutions, the Public Librarian, the Director of Primary Schools, and the Assistant Superintendent of the Ports.[75] The subjects examined ranged between eight and ten, a sound knowledge of Arithmetic, English and Italian being considered as indispensable. In the first two examinations, all candidates sat for a test in English, Italian and Arithmetic, while some did not sit the latter in the third examination held that year. Other subjects offered in that year included Chemistry, Drawing, Modern Languages (French and German), Modern and Ancient History, Geology and handwriting.[76]

The system adopted by the Governor was one of open competition. All that was required from candidates who wished to compete for clerkships, was to submit their names in full with a certificate of their ages to the Chief Secretary's Office and to be of unexceptionable good conduct. The only restriction imposed by the Governor was that candidates must be under twenty-two years of age when sitting for the examination.[77] In this sense Malta provided the first example of a Government to introduce open competition for entry into the civil service throughout the whole of the Empire, including Britain.[78]

Reid had neither informed nor sought the sanction of the Secretary of State for the introduction of this measure. It might well be that, given the controversy in Britain over the issue, he feared opposition to his plans and, by the time he had informed London, two competitive examinations had been held.[79] But when he finally did so, his actions met entirely with the full approval of the Secretary of State, who also expressed the hope 'that the measure will be attended with good effects...'[80] Neither, it seems, had he consulted, as was normally his custom, the elected members of Council. In fact, the matter was raised for the first time in Council in

June 1857 by Dr Laferla, an elected member, when he asked the Chief Secretary whether all future situations, or only some of them were intended to be conferred by examination. He also asked whether the subjects in which the candidates were to be examined were to be always the same or not. The Chief Secretary replied that, as a general rule, all junior situations would be conferred in this way and explained that the subjects examined could not in all cases be exactly the same.[81]

The introduction of competitive examinations in Malta attracted the attention of the Civil Service Commission in London which had been established in 1855 to conduct examinations on behalf of individual civil service departments. Its members wished to receive from Malta a resume' on the workings of the system adopted there.[82] Reid apparently suspected that the Civil Service Commission would not approve of his scheme of open competition and this may explain his terse reply that, despite what others may make of his scheme, he continued

'to be of opinion that the system of giving clerkships to the young men under 22 years of age who pass the best examination is working advantageously for Malta, and the competition created is evidently having the effect of improving the schools.'[83]

That this statement by the Governor was no idle defence of his measures was confirmed by a visiting Commissioner in 1879 who observed that 'the competitive system has doubtless given to the service a better class of clerks generally than those who are now in the front rank.'[84]

#### THE GROWTH OF BUREAUCRATIC INFLUENCE

One of the leading concepts in the study of politics is that of power and its distribution.[85] In a colonial setting, power, for all intents and purposes, rests with the metropolitan government. It cannot be otherwise. For a colony or dependency to be properly so, as George Cornwall Lewis has observed, the Home Government must have the capacity, even in the face of opposition from its subjects in the colony, to enforce all the laws and rules - social, political and economic - that it thinks fit.[86] This was not, for example, the case with Canada which, in 1846, was rapidly

advancing towards responsible government. 'Canada' wrote James Stephen, 'appears...in everything but the name, a distinct State...'[87] The same, however, could not be said of the Crown Colonies of which Malta was one. In their case the Crown could pass any legislation and interfere in the most minute detail of their administration. On the spot in the colony the authority of the Crown was vested in the Governor. It was delegated authority. 'The Gov[ernor]' minuted Stephen in 1843,

'has, properly speaking, no independent authority at all. All that he does he does on behalf of the Queen. Whatever powers he exercises are exercised on HM's account.'[88]

This was also reflected in Clause 4 of the Colonial Regulations which stated that 'the Governor is the single and supreme authority responsible to and responsible of His Majesty.'[89] Hence, according to Bertram 'it is the duty of all subordinate officers to efface themselves in the execution of his policy...'[90]

This, of course, was the theory of Crown Colony government for actual practice showed that very few governors managed to exercise their power to the full. Indeed, it was demonstrated in the Introduction[91] and in Chapter Four,[92] that in most Crown Colonies bureaucratic influence over decision-making was the dominant feature of government. In Malta, the fact of bureaucratic influence over government had been confirmed in the early 1830s by Frederick Hankey, the Chief Secretary of Malta, when he assured Hay at the Colonial Office, that the frequent absence of Governors from Malta made no difference to matters there.[93] Further evidence is provided by the behaviour of Stoddart, the Chief Justice, and of Langslow, the Attorney-General, who until the suppression of their office by Austin and Lewis in 1838, had sought to establish their influence over the government of the island through concerted opposition to the Chief Secretary.[94]

Finally, we have seen in the previous Chapter that, in 1843, Camillo Scceberras had accused Hector Grieg, who in 1838 had replaced Hankey as Chief Secretary, and the Crown Advocate, of organising a "camarilla" with

the sole aim of preserving their influence and power.[95] Two points must be stressed here. First, that what Sceberras was saying implied that the Chief Secretary and the Crown Advocate already possessed enormous influence and power over the process of government. Their whole effort was directed at maintaining their position of power not at acquiring it. Second, Sceberras was writing at a time when Bouverie's term as governor was drawing to a close and the appointment of a successor was expected. It is possible that Sceberras was taking the opportunity to remind the Secretary of State that as long as governors remained burdened with military - in addition to civil - duties, the power of officials would remain untouched. His accusations were, perhaps, another form of appeal for the appointment of a civil governor.

It must be said that a good portion of the influence and power of bureaucrats, especially of the Chief Secretary and of the Crown Advocate, arose mainly from the role which their offices gave them. The Chief Secretary, for example, was the main channel of communication between the governor and the governed; between the Head of Government and every other branch of the public service. All acts of Government were transmitted through his office and none of the other departments could proceed with any measure which had not been submitted for approval through his office. It was also the Chief Secretary who normally provided the initial briefing to a governor on his arrival in a colony, as well as a great measure of the advice during his tenure. According to Bertram the Chief Secretary was 'the Governor's chief lieutenant and Prime Minister',[96] and the head of the Civil Service. Taking all this into consideration, therefore, it would be absurd to speak of the influence and/or power of the Chief Secretary as being somehow illegitimate. It would have certainly made more sense, however, had Sceberras demonstrated the dangers inherent in the existing political order which vested too much power in the person of the Chief Secretary without, at the same time, providing adequate accountability

procedures to ensure that those powers were not being in any way abused. A Governor's term was too short to allow him to acquire an extensive knowledge of particulars and by the time he had done so, it was very often time for him to leave the colony.[97]

The office of Crown Advocate, which was established in Malta after the suppression of that of Attorney General, although inferior in rank to those of Chief Secretary, President of the Courts and of the Judges, was equally of great importance. The Crown Advocate was the Governor's legal adviser and it was his task to explain to the latter which of his proposed measures were allowed by law and which were not. The attack some years later by Bayley Potter in the House of Commons on the influence and power of the Crown Advocate in Malta are worth reproducing here. 'If there is an appeal to the Governor,' he said,

'he refers it to the Crown Advocate. If there is an appeal to the Chief Secretary, he also refers it to the Crown Advocate. If the appeal be to the Secretary of State at home, the Crown Advocate writes the despatch that accompanies the appeal; and if the appeal be to the Law Courts, again the Crown Advocate appears and defends the Government - that is, himself - before Judges who have been appointed by himself.'[98]

This statement was intended as a personal attack on Adrian Dingli (whom we shall meet again later), who was appointed Crown Advocate in 1854 and who served in this office for several decades. But it also serves to demonstrate how influential the office of Crown Advocate was in practice. If its occupant happened to be a lawyer of ability and stature, as Dingli undoubtedly was,[99] than its influence over the policy process was bound to be great.

Maltese political leaders had always based their demand for the appointment of a civil governor unshackled by military duties, on the assumption that he would be in a better position to personally manage the civil affairs of the colony thereby curbing bureaucratic influence over policy-making.[100] Certain incidents which occurred during the administration of More O'Ferrall and later of William Reid - both civil governors - showed that it did not freely reflect reality. There was the



clash after 1848, for example, between More O'Ferrall and his Chief Secretary, Henry Lushington, over the question of Italian exiles from revolution torn Italy. Lushington was a liberal in the widest sense of the word. He was an enthusiastic supporter of catholic and negro emancipation, the Reform Bill, the French revolution of 1830, and having made several visits to Italy, of the Italian movement for unification.[101] As events unfolded in Italy, Britain became apprehensive of the political influence that Italian exiles in Malta might come to exercise over the minds of Maltese liberals and of the diplomatic difficulties that their attacks in the Maltese press against the existing governments in Italy would create for Britain. It sought, therefore, to curb both the influx of political refugees and their political activity in Malta.[102] O'Ferrall's determination to carry out his instructions were violently and publicly opposed by Lushington, and the Governor, himself a liberal, was soon being vilified by the press in Malta and Britain, and in the House of Commons.[103] It is argued, by some authors, that the Italian refugees question was the principal cause behind O'Ferrall's early retirement from his office in Malta.[104]

Reid too had his problems with his Chief Secretary although in his case his clash was with Victor Houlton who had succeeded to the office after Lushington's death in 1854.[105] In 1856, in a letter to the Colonial Office Houlton had challenged Reid's authority to transfer, against his wishes, a clerk from the Chief Secretary's own department to another department.[106] The Chief Secretary was, as might be expected, severely reproached by the Secretary of State for his audacity but how deep the conflict between successive Governors and Chief Secretaries had been in the past was revealed, in 1858, by Reid's successor when he wrote that

'a retrospect of the past will clearly show, that the Chief Secretary's Office, instead of being channel of communications between the Head and the several official Departments of the Government, had gradually assumed to itself a position and authority not subordinate to, but almost co-equal with the Governor himself; and it is well known, that in more than one instance, the Head of that Department has assumed in public affairs a tone

of independence, not only antagonistic to the prerogatives of Her Majesty's Representative, but most injurious in its consequences...revealing before the public, the picture of a Government divided against itself.'[107]

By contrast, Dingli's particularly long term as Crown Advocate was not marred at any time by conflict with his superiors. Indeed, in 1857 Reid expressed his relief to the Secretary of State that on the retirement from office of one of the Judges Dingli did not, as was his right, seek to be promoted in his place even though the office of Judge carried a higher salary.[108] Even so, Reid was obviously not quite happy with his extensive dependence on the Crown Advocate for advice for in 1855 he was recorded by Nassau Senior to be quite anxious to receive a detail account of the latter's private conversation with Dingli.[109] Interestingly enough, the picture painted by Dingli serves to emphasize the prominent role played by a civil governor in the day to day administration of the colony. 'The principal error in our system' he told Senior,

'is that the Governor does too much...over-interference...I wish to see heads of departments forced to exercise their own judgement and discretion. I wish that the Governor was absent for three or four months every summer... Our people would be trained to go a little alone.'[110]

Although Dingli's criticism would have horrified Maltese political leaders, opposed as they were to any discretion being allowed to senior public servants, Reid was of the opinion that the criticism was justified.[111] Perhaps Dingli had abandoned a promising private career in exchange for public office for the same reason that Lushington had decided to accept the offer of office in Malta. Lushington was of the view that, although Malta was rather small in size, its public affairs strongly resembled those of larger communities, with senior civil servants having to deal with the police, finance, law, reform, education and even party conflicts.[112] Furthermore, Dingli's expression 'our people' was evidence of how faithful the Colonial Office had been to its promise to appoint Maltese to executive offices in the public service. By the late 1840s five of the eight most important departments of government, namely those of Land Revenue, Crown Advocate, Quarantine, Purveyor of Charities, and of the Treasury, were

under Maltese headship.[113]

A final example of informal bureaucratic influence can be found at the time when discussions were being held between More O'Ferrall and Earl Grey as to what changes should be introduced in the system of government in Malta. After intense discussions, as has already been indicated, it was decided, in 1849, to establish in Malta a partially elected Council of Government, the elected members forming a minority. It is clear that, until it had been established that the unofficial elected portion of the Council was to be in a minority, several senior members of the administration were opposed to any change whatsoever. 'It would appear' wrote Camillo Sceberras in a clear reference to the latter,

'that some of those whose fortune it is to be most frequently consulted, aim at keeping the country stationary and to estrange it from any possible progress in the spirit of English Institutions...'[114]

This attitude is confirmed by the correspondence of More O'Ferrall with some of his most senior subordinates. For example, it was not until July 1848 that Sim, Assistant Chief Secretary, and Thornton, Auditor-General, signalled their readiness to support the Governor's plan to admit elected representatives to the Council.[115] This in itself was not only evidence of the influence of civil servants in colonial government but also of the fact that few political reforms had any chance of success unless supported by them.

The introduction in 1849 of a mixed Council of Government composed of an official majority and an elected minority served to give formal expression and to enhance, rather than decrease, the potential for bureaucratic influence. It was a system of government which was eventually extended to nearly every Crown Colony in the British Empire and, as Bertram observed, government by official majority eventually became 'the very kernel and essence of Crown Colony Government.'[116] The rationale of this system was very simple. The mixed Council system allowed, on one hand, for 'all public questions...[to] be freely and openly ventilated...the Government [to] be publicly and directly criticised and attacked

and....required to give an account of its policy and to defend itself.'[117]

On the other hand 'the Government retains at its disposal on all questions a majority of votes...' and through this majority it

'maintains control of the finances, the processes of legislation and the general administration, or in other words, it is by this means that the Government is able to govern...'[118]

This, of course, debars unofficial members from making their votes effective. Bertram concluded that, in effect, the existence of a permanent majority of government officials on the Council tended to render the Council merely consultative or advisory. This raised, in Malta, the question of what role elected representatives were expected to play in the new Council as for all practical reasons the powers of the latter did not appear to be greatly different from those of the Council of Government which had been established in 1835.[119] Indeed, from a constitutional point of view, the main difference between the two Councils was in their composition and in the method of appointing its membership.[120] Grey had even insisted that the new Council should be known by its old title of Council of Government in order to avoid the political images that calling it a "legislature" might have conjured in the minds of local politicians.[121]

O'Ferrall was not entirely happy with this approach. Public officials, he opined, even without the advantage of a seat on the Council and a majority to back them, already enjoyed tremendous influence and authority.[122] It was an influence which arose from the necessarily centralised and non-representative nature of colonial government. What was being proposed under the Constitution of 1849 was the formal sanctioning of the role of senior civil servants as political administrators. This logic was not lost on More O'Ferrall. What was the point, he wished to know, of admitting elected representatives to the Council if these representatives were not to enjoy any authority or power? 'It is impossible' O'Ferrall told Grey 'to inspire the Maltese with confidence in such a Council...'[123]

Furthermore, his own experience of civil servants in Malta, and perhaps elsewhere, had made him wary of entrusting in their hands, as the Constitution proposed, the government of the island. Civil servants, he wrote,

'...As the sole legislators unaided by those in whom the people place confidence, they are called on to perform a duty for which they are unqualified and unfit.'[124]

It was necessary, therefore, that a scheme be devised which would allow elected representatives to exercise some degree of influence on decisions involving several aspects of Maltese life.

The solution proposed by the Governor involved the creation of three subcommittees of the Council; one for the University and Public Instruction, one for the Government Charities, and one for Public Works, all three covering spheres which accounted for a substantially high proportion of government expenditure. Elected members of Council were to hold a majority on these committees which were to consist of three elected and two official members of Council.[125] The duties of these committees were to investigate government accounts, enforce the rules of public departments, report abuses, and draw up annual reports on the efficiency and organisation of the departments under their supervision and if necessary, to make recommendations for their improvement. Recommendations, however, had to be approved by Council before they could be implemented.[126] The extensive powers of scrutiny, investigation, and recommendation that More O'Ferrall intended to give to these committees was a clear indication of the Governor's determination to give the elected members a positive role to play in the domestic affairs of the colony.

The Governor submitted that his plan, apart from having the support of his senior subordinates, had the advantage of bringing the government in closer touch with the people. 'No part of the Maltese community' O'Ferrall told Grey,

'is more interested in the favourable decision of this question than the servants of the Crown charged with the administration of the Government.

They labour under great disadvantages from not having the opportunity of making known through Representatives possessing the confidence of the Maltese, the reasons that guide them in public measures. Many measures are deprived of half their benefit, others are misunderstood and misrepresented from not being explained. A government that has nothing to conceal must gain the public confidence by having its acts fairly canvassed and examined by the Representatives of the people.'[127]

Grey thought the Governor's plan 'ingenious'[128] but nonetheless excluded all reference to the committees proposed by O'Ferrall from the Letters Patent that promulgated the Constitution in May 1849. He preferred, in a military station such as Malta, not to fetter the authority of the government with constitutionally sanctioned structures which might handicap that authority at some future stage. Creation of the committees was to be left entirely in the hands of the Governor.

What took place immediately after May 11th 1849, when the Letters Patent proclaiming the new Constitution were published in Malta, demonstrated that the Governor was not quite right in his assessment of the desire or willingness of Heads of Departments to have their administration thrown open to public scrutiny. The new Constitution did not bar public servants of whatever rank from standing in their own individual capacity for election to the Council of Government and, if elected, to take their seat in Council without the need to resign their office. This was in spite of the fact that eight out of the ten official seats on the Council had been reserved for Heads of Departments. As a result no less than five Heads and two Judges contested the elections held in August 1849, while another five candidates for election were either close relatives or friends of senior public servants.[129] There can be little doubt that the aim of these public servants was to so swamp the new Council and its committees that, in the process, the principle of public service accountability, so dear to the Governor, would be automatically defeated. Their campaign methods were also eventually denounced by their opponents, who accused them of conducting their canvassing among the lower ranks of the public service in an unacceptable and unethical manner.[130] No public servant was elected

in the 1849 poll, but two of those elected, Bishop Casolani and Adrian Dingli, were close relatives of senior public servants. It is interesting to observe also, that none of the Maltese leaders of the 1830s were elected during this election. Camillo Sceberras polled only 34 votes, while his partner of old, George Mitrovich fared even worse polling 26 votes. Mitrovich was, however, elected in the 1855 elections. Agostino Portelli who had sat on the former Council as a nominated member and who had been elected as the first President of the newly instituted Chamber of Commerce polled a total of 279 votes but this was about 150 votes less than the amount required for him to be elected.[131] Of those elected three were clerics and three lawyers.

There is little doubt, if the minutes of the Council are to be considered as providing a reliable picture of proceedings in the new Council of Government, that both More O'Ferrall and later, William Reid, managed both sides of the Council admirably. There is no evidence that either Governor employed the official majority on any issue and it appears that they both preferred to consult the elected members rather than attempt to pass any measure against their opposition. The only time that More O'Ferrall was to employ his casting vote in one of the sessions of the Council, he did so on behalf of a motion put forward by an elected member.[132] Reid, in his first statement to the Council, expressed the wish that those sitting on the Council should act as a united legislature and he promised to treat elected and official members equally. He stressed the need for consultation over all matters before they were introduced in Council, the importance of calmness in debate, and for reasonable demands. These, he told Council members, were the two qualities by which elected bodies successfully managed their duties.[133] Throughout his term Reid remained faithful to his promise. Apart from continuing with the system of committees instituted by More O'Ferrall, all important legislative matters were first submitted for the consideration of elected members in an

informal and private manner before being introduced in Council.[134] Furthermore, in matters which were mainly of a municipal character, such as the management of public lands, roadworks, and public works the elected members were allowed an informal veto, and nothing which they opposed was done.[135] This approach led Lushington, the Chief Secretary, to lament that Reid was too prone to give in to the wishes of the elected members.[136]

Ironically, during the period 1849-1858 if problems cropped up in the Council those responsible were, almost invariably, public servants. The case of Judge Bruno was the most important and led to the first of a series of amendments to the Constitution of 1849. From the time of his election in 1854, Bruno, a former Crown Advocate, actively opposed most of the measures of the local government. Reid held that the behaviour of the judge was unacceptable and objectionable and he requested the Colonial Office to advise him whether it was proper for a public servant to continue to hold his seat in Council and his office simultaneously.[137] Although it was a fairly new issue, since this type of mixed Council was of recent origin, the Colonial Office had already dealt with the matter in the case of the New South Wales Council in 1845. In that year Lord Stanley, who at the time was Secretary of State, had laid down that if a public servant was elected, thereby assuming responsibilities which prevented him from supporting the government in the legislature, he could not retain his office.[138] In the case of Judge Bruno the Colonial Office concluded that since he held his office 'on good behaviour', he could not be dismissed and as an elected member of Council he must be allowed to act and vote freely.[139] The Secretary of State decided, therefore, that the best course would be to exclude Judges altogether from sitting on the Council of Government, and a measure to this effect was passed by Letters Patent dated 30 July 1857. Judge Bruno and Judge Micallef, the President of the Courts who held his seat on the Council by virtue of his office, rather than election, resigned



their seats.

Viewed in its totality civil government had proved successful, even though it cannot be said, as was seen in this Chapter, that it had succeeded in banishing the spectre of bureaucratic influence. Indeed, the Constitution of 1849 had increased the potential for the exercise of bureaucratic power since, in practice, it had vested ultimate authority in an official majority which consisted mainly of Heads of Departments sitting in the Council of Government. That these Heads had not been able to exert this power was due, in no small measure, to More O'Ferrall who discovered in the creation of three sub-committees of Council the required counterbalance. Reid too had been successful in containing the drift towards bureaucratic influence over government, even though in the view of some of his subordinates this appeared to indicate weakness in the face of the elected minority. It is not, however, to be supposed that More O'Ferrall or Reid had managed to reform the attitude of Heads of Departments. Two examples may suffice to show that they had not managed to do so. First, there is the conversation of Sciortino, ex-professor of Political Economy with Nassau Senior. In surveying Maltese society Sciortino stated that the tendency of public servants was to hold together, aloof from other groups in Maltese society.[140] This observation is of special interest for, as we have seen in Chapter Six, a similar complaint used to be made about British Heads of Departments in Malta. By the middle of the 1850s these offices had been taken over by Maltese officials who it seems had adopted the habits of those whom they had replaced and against whom they too had complained. In this sense, it appears that indigenization of the service not only failed to rectify old problems, but was apparently giving rise to new divisions and conflicts, this time between the Maltese themselves. Second, there is the case of Mitrovich, who in 1858 resigned his seat on the Council arguing that as long as the Council remained under the control of the official majority he could not be of any use to his

country. He decided, therefore, to retire and wait 'for some improvement in the constitution of the Council.'[141]

Civil government had also laid the foundations for the emergence of a modern civil service. The introduction of competitive examinations for the filling of vacant clerkships served to distinguish, for the first time, clerical offices from other offices in the public service. It may be said that the Maltese civil service, as distinct from the Maltese public service, the latter including in its ranks University professors to unskilled labours, was created in 1857. In some of the following Chapters this separation will be shown to become more accentuated with the division of the civil service into classes or grades.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. H. Parris, (1969) Constitutional Bureaucracy, Allen & Unwin, London, pp.36,pp.40-42, and pp.80-82.
3. Wellington to Russell, 2 Jul. 1847, Russell MSS. G & D 22/6, quoted in H.I. Lee, (1972), Malta 1813-1914: A Study In Constitutional and Strategic Development, Progress Press, Valletta, p.111.
4. Earl Grey, (1853), The Colonial Policy of Lord John Russell's Administration, Bentley, London, Vol.II, p.294.
5. Grey to Russell, 25 Jun. 1847, Russell MSS. G & D 22/6, in H.I. Lee, op.cit., p.111.
6. Earl Grey, op.cit., Vol.II, p.294.
7. Copies of Despatches of Earl Grey, 1847, 1848, 1849; Reports; Lushington; Correspondence 1850, 1860, etc., Sessional Paper No.217, Vol.XLIII, HMSO, (1868/9), p.3.
8. Ibid.
9. H.I. Lee, op.cit., p.112.
10. Ibid., pp.113-4.
11. Hector Grieg had succeeded to the office of Chief Secretary in the late 1830s following the forced retirement of Frederick Hankey and after nearly two decades of service in Malta. In June 1845 he made his first appeal for retirement but had to continue in office until late in 1846. Stuart to Stanley, 11 Jun. 1845, C.O.158/132 and Bouchell to Grey, 22 Jul. 1846, C.O.158/136, PRO, Kew, London.

12. Reports addressed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies by the late H. Lushington in the years 1847 and 1848 on the Establishment of Municipal Institutions. Copies of Despatches of Earl Grey, op.cit., pp.8-14.

13. Ibid., p.9.

14. Ibid., p.12.

15. For a full discussion of the issues surrounding the grant of the 1849 Constitution see H.I. Lee, op.cit., Ch.VI.

16. J.J. Cremona, (1963), *The Outline of the Constitutional Development of Malta*, Univ. of Malta, Valletta, pp.6-7.

17. M. Wight, (1946), *The Development of the Legislative Council 1606-1945*, Faber & Faber, London, p.77.

18. Despatches of Earl Grey, op.cit., p.5.

19. This transfer was not theoretical but practical. Most important offices and many minor ones remained under the patronage of the Sec. of State for the Colonies. However, in 1838, Britain had promised the Maltese that, with few exceptions, offices in Malta will be filled from among the Maltese. In fulfilling its promise the Colonial Office became dependent on the Governor to forward nominations for vacancies. In practice, therefore, the man on the spot in Malta enjoyed real powers of patronage. In Canada by the later 1830s the Governor had come to enjoy, though for different reasons, similar influence over appointments. But in Australia members of the Legislative Council of New South Wales were, even as late as 1852, protesting that 'the bestowal of office among' them was 'still exercised by or at the nomination of the Colonial Minister...as if the colony itself were but the fief of that Minister.' They went on to demand that 'offices of trust and emoluments should be conferred only on the settled inhabitants, the office of Governor alone excepted...and that the whole patronage of the colony should be vested in him [Governor] and the Executive Council, unfettered by instructions from the Minister for the Colonies.' Declaration and Remonstrance of the Legislative Council of NSW, in K.N. Bell and W.P. Morrell (eds), (1968), *Select Documents on British Colonial Policy: 1830-1860*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, pp.138-9.

20. P. Knaplund, (1953), *James Stephen and the British Colonial System 1813-1847*, Univ. of Wisconsin Press, Madison, p.57; and Earl Grey, op.cit., p.38. While in colonies possessing 'responsible' government this practice was eventually discontinued, in Malta appointments of this nature remained subject to confirmation from the Sec. of State as late as 1921.

21. Before his appointment as Civil Governor of Malta More O'Ferrall had already served as Secretary at the Treasury and as Secretary at the Admiralty. See A.V. Laferla, (1946), *British Malta, Vol.I*, Aquilina, Valletta, pp.196-7.

22. Ibid., p.197.

23. A.V. Laferla, op.cit., p.215.

24. More O'Ferrall to Earl Grey, 21 Feb. 1851, C.O.158/157, PRO, London.

25. M.C.M. Simpson, (1882), (ed), N.W. Senior: *Conversations in Egypt and Malta*, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, London, Vol.II, p.305.

26. Ibid., Vol.II, p.305.
27. More O'Ferrall to Grey, 18 Mar. 1848, C.O.158/140; 10 Apr. 1848, C.O.158/140; 12 Aug. 1848, C.O.158/142; 24 Aug. 1848, C.O.158/142; and 24 May 1849, C.O.158/145, PRO, Kew, London.
28. More O'Ferrall to Grey, Governor's Report, 17 Dec. 1849, C.O.158/147, PRO, Kew, London.
29. Memorandum on Malta Government in 1848 and 1849, by Governor More O'Ferrall, Jan. 1850, Malta -xiii, Mediterranean, C.O.883/1, PRO, Kew, London.
30. More O'Ferrall to Grey, 4 Dec. 1849, C.O.158/147, PRO, Kew, London. A single organisation which included members from both communities had existed between 1809 and 1814. After this period, however, the two groups formed their own separate establishments. See A.V. Laferla, op.cit., Vol.I, p.212.
31. Memorandum, op.cit., C.O.883/1, PRO, Kew, London.
32. Memorandum on Malta Government, op.cit., C.O.883/1, PRO, Kew, London.
33. Ibid.
34. Sim, Acting Chief Secretary to V. Casolani, 7 Jan. 1851, MS.1092, National Library of Malta, Valletta.
35. More O'Ferrall to Grey, 21 Feb. 1851, C.O.158/157, PRO, Kew, London.
36. Memorandum on Malta Government, op.cit., C.O.883/1, PRO, Kew, London.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. More O'Ferrall to Grey, 15 Apr. 1848, C.O.158/140, PRO, Kew, London.
42. Ibid.
43. Memorandum on Malta Government, op.cit., C.O.883/1, PRO, Kew, London.
44. More O'Ferrall to Grey, Report on Government Charitable Institutions, 21 Feb. 1851, C.O.158/157, PRO, Kew, London.
45. More O'Ferrall to Grey, 14 Mar. 1849, C.O.158/145, PRO, Kew, London.
46. Memorandum on Malta Government, op.cit., C.O.883/1, PRO, Kew, London.
47. More O'Ferrall to Grey, 14 Mar. 1849, C.O.158/145, PRO, Kew, London.
48. Memorandum on Malta Government, op.cit., C.O.883/1, PRO, Kew, London.
49. More O'Ferrall to Grey, 27 Dec. 1848, C.O.158/143, PRO, Kew, London.

50. Memorandum on Malta Government, *op.cit.*, C.O.158/1, PRO, Kew, London.
51. More O'Ferrall to Grey, 9 Nov.1848, C.O.158/143, PRO, Kew, London.
52. In the first ten months of 1857 William Reid, who succeeded More O'Ferrall as Governor, claimed to have received 1,163 petitions for employment. See Reid to Labouchere, 5 Nov. 1857, C.O.158/182, PRO, Kew, London.
53. Grey to Stuart, 22 Dec. 1846, C.O.158/135, PRO, Kew, London.
54. More O'Ferrall to Grey, 9 Nov. 1848, C.O.158/143, PRO, Kew, London.
55. Min. 24 Nov. 1848 by Merivale on More O'Ferrall to Grey, 9 Nov. 1848, C.O.158/143, PRO, Kew, London.
56. Min. 25 Nov. 1848 by Grey on More O'Ferrall to Grey, 9 Nov. 1848, C.O.158/143, PRO, Kew, London.
57. More O'Ferrall to Grey, 9 Nov. 1848, C.O.158/143, PRO, Kew, London.
58. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew, London.
59. *Ibid.*
60. Grey min. 25 Nov. 1848 on More O'Ferrall to Grey, 9 Nov. 1848, C.O.158/143, PRO, Kew, London.
61. *Ibid.*
62. Sir Stafford Northcote and Sir Charles Trevelyan were, in 1853, appointed to report on matters connected with the Home Civil Service, including tests of physical and intellectual fitness of candidates for offices and the regulation of promotion. Their Report was published in 1854. See E.W. Cohen, *op.cit.*, pp.92-95.
63. Philip Mason, (1985), *The Men Who Ruled India*, Guild Pub, London, p.125.
64. H. Parris, *op.cit.*, p.72; C. Leys, *Politics in Britain*, (1964) Heineman, London, p.234.
65. Merivale, 24 Nov. 1848 and Grey, 25 Nov. 1848, mins. on More O'Ferrall to Grey, 9 Nov. 1848, C.O.158/143, PRO, Kew, London.
66. Reid quoted by Senior, in Simpson, (ed), *op.cit.*, pp.253-4.
67. *Ibid.*, p.254.
68. *Ibid.*, p.254.
69. *Ibid.*, pp.252-4.
70. *Ibid.*, p.254.
71. Reid to Labouchere, 5 Nov. 1857, C.O.158/182, PRO, Kew, London.
72. *Ibid.*
73. Reid to Labouchere, 23 May 1857, C.O.158/181, PRO, Kew, London.

74. Malta Government Gazette, No.1902, 13 Feb. 1857 and No.1903, 27 Feb. 1857, C.O.162/15, PRO, Kew, London.
75. Malta Government Gazette, No.1903, 27 Feb. 1857, C.O.162/15, PRO, Kew, London.
76. Ibid., and Malta Government Gazette, No.1907, 24 Apr. 1857 and No.1916, 26 Jun. 1857, C.O.162/15, PRO, Kew, London.
77. Ibid., and Reid to Labouchere, 23 May 1857, C.O.158/181, PRO, Kew, London.
78. We shall see in the following Chapter, however, that with the return to military rule this uniqueness was soon to be lost, for open competition was quickly replaced by limited competition.
79. Reid to Labouchere, 23 May 1857, C.O.158/181, PRO, Kew, London.
80. Labouchere to Reid, 13 Jun. 1857, in Mins. of Council Debates, C.O.161/27, PRO, Kew, London.
81. Mins. of the Debates of the Council of Government, Sitting 46, 2 Jun. 1857, C.O.161/27, PRO, Kew, London.
82. Reid to Labouchere, 18 Dec. 1857, C.O.158/182, PRO, Kew, London.
83. Ibid.
84. Julyan to Hicks Beach, 7 Apr. 1879, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
85. See, for example, J. Schwarzmantel, (1987), Structures of Power, An Introduction to Politics, Wheatsheaf Books, Brighton.
86. G.C. Lewis, (1841), An Essay on the Government of Dependencies, Murray, London, 1841, pp.295-6.
87. Quoted in H.L. Hall, (1937), The Colonial Office: A History, Longmanns, Green and Co, London, p.77.
88. P. Knaplund, op.cit., p.45.
89. A. Bertram, (1930), The Colonial Service, Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge, p.19.
90. Ibid., p.18.
91. See Chapter One.
92. See Chapter Four; also Howe to Russell, 18 Sept. 1839, quoted in W.P.M. Kennedy (ed), (1918), Documents of the Canadian Constitution 1759-1915, Oxford, p.487.
93. Hankey to Hay, 15 Nov. 1831, C.O.158/69, PRO, Kew, London.
94. Hay to Hankey, 12 Aug. 1831, C.O.324/83, PRO, Kew, London.
95. Encl., Sceberras to Stanley, 4 May 1843 in Bouverie to Stanley, 10 May 1843, C.O.158/125, PRO, Kew, London.

96. A. Bertram, *op.cit.*, p.31.
97. A Governor's term of office was only six years, which was too short a period for a Governor to familiarize himself with the affairs of a colony such as Malta.
98. Bayley Potter, House of Commons, Hansard, Third Series, 1876, CCXXIX, 1981.
99. See Chapter Nine.
100. See Chapters Three, Four, and Six.
101. H. Lushington, (1860), *Three Essays*, London, pp.xxi-xxii.
102. A.V. Laferla, *op.cit.*, Vol.I, pp.200-3.
103. H. Lushington, *op.cit.*, p.liii; and A.V. Laferla, *op.cit.*, Vol.II, p.203.
104. A.V. Laferla, *op.cit.*, Vol.I, p.215.
105. Malta Government Gazette, No.1833, 16 Oct. 1855, C.O.162/14, PRO, Kew, London.
106. A.V. Laferla, *op.cit.*, Vol.1, p.236.
107. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew, London.
108. Reid to Labouchere, 18 Mar. 1857, C.O.158/181, PRO, Kew, London.
109. M.C.M. Simpson (ed), *op.cit.*, Vol.II, p.253.
110. *Ibid.*, p.244.
111. *Ibid.*, p.253.
112. H. Lushington, *op.cit.*, p.xxxix.
113. More O'Ferrall to Grey, 1 Feb. 1849. C.O.158/145, PRO, Kew, London.
114. Sceberras to Stanley, 4 May 1843, encl. in Bouverie to Stanley, 10 May 1843, C.O.158/125, PRO, Kew, London.
115. Sim to More O'Ferrall, 7 Jul. 1848, and Thornton to More O'Ferrall, 10 Jul. 1848, in More O'Ferrall to Grey, 10 Jul. 1848, C.O.158/142, PRO, Kew, London.
116. A. Bertram, *op.cit.*, pp.167-8.
117. *Ibid.*, p.175.
118. *Ibid.*, pp.168-9.
119. From the beginning the intention was not to give the Maltese too much power. In 1835 all authority remained vested in the Governor. He was responsible for selecting the unofficial members of Council and for proposing legislation and resolutions in the Council. He could, if he wished over-ride the advice of Council members. In 1849 some changes occurred. Unofficial members were elected and legislation and resolutions

could be introduced in Council by any member. However, in all important matters the Governor could rely on the official majority to carry his measures. Still the balance of power remained, therefore, on the side of the Governor.

120. The 1835 Council of Government consisted of seven members all of whom were nominated and retained their seat on Council at the pleasure of the Crown. The 1849 Council was composed of eighteen members eight of whom were elected by a body of electors qualified to do so.

121. Copies of Despatches of Earl Grey, *op.cit.*, p.5.

122. More O'Ferrall to Grey, 10 Jul. 1848, C.O.158/142, PRO, Kew, London.

123. More O'Ferrall to Grey, 23 Dec. 1848, C.O.158/143, PRO, Kew, London.

124. *Ibid.*

125. More O'Ferrall to Grey, 10 Jul. 1848, C.O.158/142, PRO, Kew, London.

126. More O'Ferrall to Grey, 1 Feb. 1849, C.O.158/143, PRO, Kew, London.

127. More O'Ferrall to Grey, 1 Feb. 1849, C.O.158/145, PRO, Kew, London.

128. Grey to More O'Ferrall, 7 Aug. 1848, C.O.158/142, PRO, Kew, London.

129. See Risultato Definitivo della Votazione del 1849 pel Consiglio di Governo, (1849), Malta.

130. 'Uedba lil Poplu Malti', an 1849 electoral sheet, dated 10 Aug. 1849, preserved at the Episcopal Archives, Gozo, Malta, and reproduced in J. Bezzina, (1985), Religion and Politics in a Crown Colony, 1798-1864, Bugelli Pub, Valletta, p.37.

131. Risultato Definitivo della Votazione del 1849 pel il Consiglio di Governo, (1849), Malta Govt. Press, Valletta.

132. Mins. of the Council of Government, sitting of 5 Aug. 1850, C.O.161/17, PRO, Kew, London.

133. Mins. of the Council of Government, sitting of 7 Jan. 1852, C.O.161/21, PRO, Kew, London.

134. M.C.M. Simpson (ed), *op.cit.*, Vol.II, p.242 and p.253.

135. *Ibid.*, p.143.

136. H. Lushington, *op.cit.*, p.liv.

137. Reid to Labouchere, 13 Oct. 1856, C.O.158/179, PRO, Kew, London.

138. Stanley to Gipps, 1 Jan. 1845, Historical Records of Australia, First Series, XXIV, 163, quoted in Wight, *op.cit.*, p.108.

139. Merivale mins. on Reid to Labouchere, 13 Oct. 1856, C.O.158/179, PRO, Kew, London.

140. M.C.M. Simpson (ed), *op.cit.*, Vol.II, p.238.

141. Mitrovich to Stanley, encl. in Reid to Stanley, 22 May 1858, C.O.158/186, PRO, Kew, London.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE LIBERAL TWILIGHT AND CREEPING IMPERIALISM: 1858-1878

The departure, in 1858, of Reid from Malta at the end of his six-year term as Governor marks the beginning of the end of the post-1832 period of "liberal" colonial development for Malta. During this period the longed for separation between civil and military government had been conceded and a new, partly elected, Council of Government was also created. Press freedom, once unknown in Malta, had become firmly established. Changes had also taken place in the sphere of public administration. The readmission of Maltese public servants to executive offices in the Island's administration had practically ensured the rapid indigenization of the Maltese public service, while as a result of the introduction of civil government and of limited electoral representation some improvement had taken place in public administration. The first ensured greater personal supervision of the administration by the Governor while the second brought, for the first time, the management of public departments and of public finances under the scrutiny of elected representatives. Finally, in 1857, the principle of open competition - a highlight of the British Northcote and Trevelyan Report - as the basis for entry into the civil service of the Island, was also adopted.

Nonetheless, over this same period the Maltese public service had lost little of its traditional functions. The only significant exception was the suppression, in 1837, of the Grain Department. Indeed, until 1858, London had enjoyed greater success in resisting an expansion in public service responsibilities than in trimming them, although some colonial officials nevertheless, wished to see greater commitment from the local government in the field of education. Neither were the political developments of the period enough to satisfy Maltese aspirations as these fell short of representative government. But, overall, each reform did tend to strengthen the belief that, in time, other reforms would eventually be conceded by

Britain. This view was also entertained by Earl Grey who, in granting to Malta the Constitution of 1849, expressed his belief 'as to the advantages to be attained by the gradual introduction' of electoral representation and noted that he looked 'forward to the experiment...about to be tried with hopeful anticipation'.[1]

Events after 1858 were, however, to prove otherwise. By the middle of the 1870s a shift of policy by Britain towards Malta was to become clearly apparent. Indeed, beginning with this Chapter we shall see that political retrogression, instability and conflict were to become more common in Malta. From this time onwards was to begin an era, stretching until 1921, during which Anglo-Maltese relations were to deteriorate rapidly reaching a situation of crisis by the early 1900s. The apparent cause for this crisis was the "language question" which centred around British efforts, after 1880, to replace Italian with English as the language of education, administration and the law courts, and the resistance by the Maltese upper and middle class to this policy.

The real cause of the crisis was much broader, however, and can be attributed, courtesy of hindsight, to Britain's changing status as a world power. In the forties and fifties Britain was still the acknowledged naval and economic power of the period. Such was Britain's international standing that many in Britain confidently declared that it was the world that needed Britain and not the other way round.[2] Some would have done away with colonies and Empire for Britain, they claimed, required neither. Although no government minister subscribed to this view, it was this frame of mind which had made concessions to "fortress" Malta possible. As threats to British supremacy appeared remote, Britain could afford to be generous to the Maltese.

In the 1860s, however, British naval and economic supremacy was beginning to feel the challenge of other powers, but notably from France and Prussia.[3] Gradually, as Britain's sense of security began to

evaporate so did it gradually seek to reassert its military interests in Malta over those of the population. Until 1880, it had hoped to do this without antagonizing Malta's middle and upper classes and would have probably succeeded but for the behaviour of some of its Governors, who not only occasioned the withdrawal of civil government, but tended to make frequent use of the official majority in matters which involved no imperial interest. In the period 1858-1878, the period examined in this Chapter, no less than four Governors ruled over Malta, namely Gaspard le Marchant (1858-64), Henry Storks (1864-67), Patrick Grant (1867-72) and Charles van Straubenzee (1872-78).[4] Of the four, only Storks refrained from the use of the official majority preferring, instead, to follow in the tradition of More O'Ferrall and William Reid of either postponing or shelving those measures where consensus was lacking. Government use of the official majority did not by itself violate the letter of the Constitution which allowed for it; but it undermined its spirit for it was expected that, in all matters of a local nature, the government would give greater weight to the views of the elected members.[5]

Initially, the Colonial Office squared itself on the side of the Maltese. Governors were warned by the Colonial Office not to abuse of their powers and in 1864, in an attempt to stamp out this practice, Secretary of State Cardwell laid down the rule that no money vote was to be pressed against the opposition of a majority of the elected members, other than in exceptional cases.[6] Some years later another Secretary of State had no hesitation in publicly censuring Governor Straubenzee for departing from this rule.[7] Even with respect to the reintroduction of military government the Colonial Office was not entirely satisfied that it had adopted the right measure and, until the early 1870s, had left the option of returning Malta to a civilian system of government under active consideration.

All this seemed to make the prospect of a future crisis quite

improbable. But with every political retrogression or defeat within the Council, the resolve of the Maltese political elite to work for a new Constitution which would give them greater control over local affairs became more determined. As the international challenge to British domination increased, however, British determination to resist Maltese pressures for reform became equally determined. This resolve was further strengthened by developments in the Mediterranean which appeared destined to influence Britain's standing in Malta. On the one hand it was feared that French expansion in North Africa and a large annual seasonal Maltese migration to this region would result eventually, in an extension of French influence over Malta's labouring poor.[8] On the other hand, Britain feared that the success of Italian nationalism to forge a unified Italian state would serve to inspire a spirit of irredentism among Malta's italianate middle and upper classes.[9]

It was these fears which, in the 1870s, eventually led Britain to reconsider its policy in Malta. The limited autonomy until then enjoyed by the islanders was to be curtailed; Cardwell's Rule was to be "re-interpreted" and the authority of governors was to be publicly upheld at all times; civil government no longer featured as an option; and efforts were to be made to integrate Malta more fully into the British Empire and to make Maltese interests coincide more intimately with those of Britain. This meant in practice that every stratum of Maltese society socially, culturally and economically was to become dependent on Britain and its empire. It was envisaged to effect this by a determined policy of anglicization. A wider diffusion of English among all classes of Maltese society, Britain hoped, would result in new opportunities for Maltese migration to English-speaking portions of the Empire and would also help to consolidate the loyalty of future generations of Maltese for whom English, rather than Italian, would be the language of education, commerce and government. But the "language question", to which this policy gave rise,

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did not become a prominent issue until the 1880s and as such is not of major concern in this Chapter. Nonetheless, we shall see in the following Chapter that, by 1878, pressures on Britain to adopt some form of language policy for Malta were already growing.

The question which is of most concern to us here, however, is how the various issues of the period 1858-1878 influenced developments in the Maltese public service. In 1858, as we have seen in the previous Chapter, the Maltese public service seemed poised to enter the modern era at the same time as the British and Indian services. It was, by any standard for this tiny military outpost, an encouraging achievement. Furthermore, the Maltese public service, more than ever before, had come to occupy a unique position in the colony and had become the focal point of nearly the entire society. Its senior members (who were nearly all Maltese), formed, for all practical purposes, with the Governor, the government. It was also the major civil employer in the island, the number of its employees - clerical, professional or otherwise - touching the thousand mark. Its clerical and professional offices provided almost the only stable encouragement to educational merit and achievement in Malta. On many of the services it provided, such as hospitals, the asylums, the village schools, and outdoor relief, depended large sections of the population. As an institution, therefore, the Maltese public service was prized and valued by all classes of Maltese society while, in influence and prestige, it ranked second only to the Catholic Church.

But there was another side too. The fact that the civil service was the government meant that, in times of political conflict, it was not only exposed to the attacks of those who opposed the government and/or British policy, but there also existed a danger of serious divisions within its ranks. This latter danger, as we shall see, had become more real with indigenization. Heads of Departments were, at the same time, distinguished members of the local community and agents of a foreign power. As long as

government measures coincided with popular expectations their position in the community was not threatened. But whenever these measures, whether originating with them or from London, were opposed by the elected leaders of the community, these same Heads, not infrequently, became the focus of bitter attacks in the Council, in the press, and in public. Thus, because of their dual role as administrators and legislators senior civil servants tended, almost inevitably, to find themselves at the centre of every political row and conflict. Unlike their counterparts in Britain, Maltese civil servants could neither plead nor claim neutrality. Finally, because of the existing income and literacy qualifications for voters, public servants tended to form a substantial proportion of the Maltese electorate. This not only added to their political muscle but also made them the focus of a good deal of vote canvassing and electoral politics. In the process, existing divisions within the public service, notably in relation to salaries, were exacerbated and new ones created. Consequently, it will be seen that, as Maltese society became more politicized and fragmented, the Maltese civil service similarly became more politicized and fragmented.

In the period 1858-1878, the period examined in this Chapter, things did not yet reach this stage but, as we shall see, the indicators were all pointing in that direction. Indeed, internal divisions, conflict between government and governed, concern over foreign influences, and developments in Europe and the Mediterranean, tend to dominate this period with the public service receiving only sporadic attention. It was, as at the turn of the century, a watershed period in international affairs and since Malta's destiny was bound up with that of British interests in Europe and the Mediterranean, it was also to herald a new political era for Malta and, consequently, for its public service.

#### THE ADMINISTRATION UNDER LE MERCHANT

Sir Gaspard le Marchant took over from Reid as civil governor of Malta at the very end of April 1858. His previous appointments had been as

governor of Newfoundland and, later, of Nova Scotia.[10] In Newfoundland, his success in steering the colony out of its social and economic difficulties by a show of firmness and energy had won him the praise of Earl Grey, at the time British Secretary of State for the Colonies.[11] In Nova Scotia, by contrast, the colony's progress towards 'the full adoption of "responsible government" '[12] - the first to do so - served to temper and constrain Le Marchant's tendency to "rule". He soon forgot, however, the lessons he had learnt under this system of government for, in the next six years, he was to rule Malta autocratically.[13] He proved, in fact to be a governor in the Maitland mould, outspoken and determined to carry his view even in opposition to that of the Secretary of State for the Colonies.[14] Like Maitland, he held to the view that the Governor should be the sole authority in the colony and the source of all honours, rewards and offices in the public service. This was exemplified by his distaste for the system of open competitive examinations which Reid had established in 1857 for clerkships in the civil service of the island.[15] 'The successful candidates' of open competition, Le Marchant complained,

'do not feel to be under any obligation towards the government for the attainment of places which they owe exclusively to their own abilities.'[16]

Thus one of his first measures as Governor of Malta was to restrict competition for offices in the public service to candidates who had been specially nominated by his office.[17]

Le Marchant's initial attention in Malta was directed towards the public service. His judgement, expressed in his despatch of 10 September 1858 to the Secretary of State for the Colonies was, that the Maltese public service was both overcrowded with offices and inefficient.[18] According to the Governor, the existing number of offices was 'utterly out of all proportion to the work required',[19] and duties which in North America were performed by two or three clerks, in Malta required the employment of between eight to ten clerks. Some departments, such as the

Public Works Department, which employed over 500 persons, mainly labourers, he considered to be extraneous to the proper tasks of government and in the 'first principle opposed to free-trade' and 'injurious to Government and oppressive in its result to the people...'[20] This state of affairs Le Marchant attributed - as Austin and Lewis had done in 1838[21] - to the policy adopted by his predecessors in office who, seeking popularity, tended to crowd public offices with clerks and other employees.[22]

Although we have seen, on different occasions, examples of the above policy and of the pressures to which Governors were subjected, in 1858, it was not an entirely correct assessment. Political discontent, reinforced as it normally was in the case of Malta by the poor social condition of the people, had been immeasurably reduced by the political reforms of the 1840s.[23] Furthermore, a constant attention to civil affairs, especially commerce, by both More O'Ferrall and William Reid, had led to an improvement in the economic, and hence, social condition of the people.[24] This improvement was further enhanced in the period 1854-57 by the rapid expansion of British military activity in Malta as a result of the Crimean War and the Indian mutiny. Price has estimated that in 1856 alone, naval and military expenditure in Malta amounted to nearly £800,000, or about four times the amount for 1851 (See Figure 8:1). Consequently, opportunities for employment were also abundant and although the cost-of-living had registered a sharp rise, wages outstripped prices to the extent that the majority of Maltese lived remarkably well.[25] Indeed, at one stage the local press took it on itself to exhort the people against the folly of spending their "balaclava profits" in imitation of some of the rich foreigners visiting the island.[26] As a consequence of the combined effect of this prosperity and of the political reforms conceded earlier, the government of the colony was not by any means unpopular and did not need to resort to patronage to acquire popularity. Reid, in fact, had voluntarily renounced his patronage and had proceeded to regulate entry



# BRITISH MILITARY & NAVAL SPENDING IN MALTA 1826-1881

Source : C. A. Price (1954)

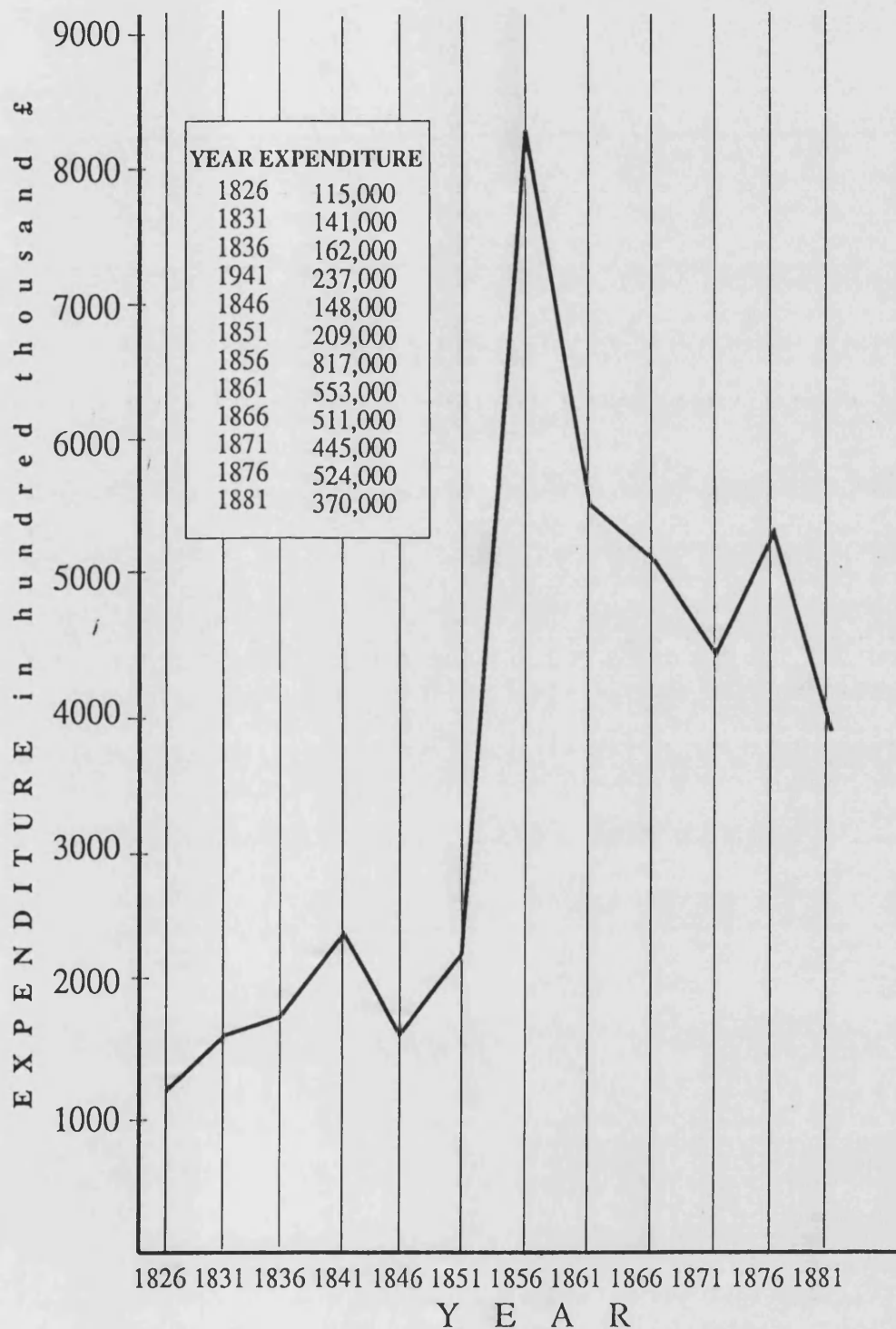


Figure 8:1

into the civil service by means of a system of open competitive examinations.[27]

Nearer to the point, perhaps, the excess in the number of clerks had more to do with the existing 'superfluity of young educated men',[28] the direct product of government efforts to encourage education, and with the absence of an established system of retirement pensions than with any other motive. In Malta the civil service was the only institution that offered many university graduates, members of the professions, and others with a secondary level of education the opportunity for a generally secure lifetime career.[29] The professions in Malta were so overstocked that many of their members preferred the security of a government clerkship to the uncertainties of private practice.[30] Not infrequently, individuals with an established or potentially rewarding practice, demonstrated little hesitation in exchanging it for a government appointment.[31] Commercial activity, with its long periods of troughs and short bursts of prosperity, did not provide similar security and was, as a consequence, less attractive to educated young men. Hence, government offices seem to have provided the main motivation for attendance at educational establishments. Consequently, if their number was to be strictly restricted to what was absolutely necessary, local government efforts to encourage education would have been defeated as there would have been little incentive for young persons to seek education.[32] This was forcefully demonstrated after 1857, by the great boost given to education by the introduction of competitive examinations for civil service clerkships which, for the first time, made merit instead of patronage, the key to government employment. This latter point will be raised again in Chapter Ten.[33]

On their own these considerations tended to encourage the maintenance of a large bureaucracy but they were particularly strengthened by the absence of an established scheme of retirement pensions. We have seen earlier that, despite old age or infirmity, Maltese civil servants tended

to cling to office for as long as possible as no superannuation scheme existed in Malta.[34] All that they were entitled to was a small monthly allowance which, in most cases, was not enough to guarantee their existing standard of living.[35] Hence, pressures to provide offices for graduates and school leavers were not balanced by the creation of a number of vacancies, the result of retirement at a fixed age, or after a fixed number of years of service, from among senior members. This is borne out by Le Marchant who complained that Heads of departments were

‘chiefly men of very advanced [ages]...wholly incompetent and unfit for the performance of their respective duties...and that for years past, whenever incapacity, unfitness, and other disqualification was brought home to any officer, he was merely transferred from one department to another.’[36]

This, the Governor alleged, was one of the chief reasons for the inefficient state in which the Maltese public service found itself. The administration of the Courts, he wrote, for example, was in a discreditable state with ‘every one who from mental and physical defect was disqualified for other departments’[37] being transferred there. As a consequence the work of every branch of the judiciary had fallen seriously behind, creating ‘the greatest inconvenience’[38] and considerably shaking public confidence in the administration of justice. Arrears were also to be found in the Customs, while the educational establishments, ‘these valuable institutions’, as the Governor called them, had been reduced ‘to the lowest state of inefficiency.’[39] But, according to the Governor, the problems of these departments paled in significance when compared to the disgraceful state of the Police Department. The Head of Police, Mr Sedley, ‘was hopelessly in debt with almost every merchant and shopkeeper in the Town’ and was ‘altogether at the mercy of parties, whom it is his first duty to watch over and control.’ His subordinates, ill-paid and under no effective leadership levied, according to Le Marchant,

‘a sort of "black-mail" upon the public, who are so entirely in their hands, that they dare not complain, and yet are sensibly alive to these abuses.’[40]

The very low salaries with which most public servants were rewarded,

the result of the overcrowding of offices, created in the opinion of the Governor more difficulties and dangers. First, they excited divisions and jealousies within the service itself. Many clerks were vociferous in their claim that, while the salaries of Heads of Departments allowed the latter to enjoy a lavish standard of living, their own salaries were so low

'as literally to deprive their families of the comforts, if not the necessities of life, that they had previously considered their government salaries would confer.'[41]

This point had been raised only a few months earlier before the Governor's own despatch by George Mitrovich, an elected member of Council who, in his letter of resignation to the Secretary of State, wrote that the

'Civil List is very disproportionate - profusion on one side and misery and starvation on the other',[42]

adding however, that the efforts of the elected members to secure a more equitable scale of salaries had been defeated by Heads of Departments and other officials sitting on the Council of Government. These divisions became more pronounced at the time of the Crimean War and shortly after when the cost of living 'had almost doubled.'[43] Most civil servants found that their salaries were no longer adequate and, as their position worsened, appeals were made by the Governor for permission to pay civil servants a special subsidy for the duration of the emergency.[44]

Second, low salaries tended to undermine the attachment to the government of its own servants. On this point Le Marchant was adamant:

'...There can be nothing', he wrote,

'more weakening, more pernicious, or more obstructive to the best interests of government than thus creating a class of public servants, whom it is impossible properly to remunerate, and who gradually cease to be loyally disposed, because in their opinion change is the only chance left, likely to bring forward their advancement.'[45]

The kind of "change" to which the Governor alluded to meant, certainly, a transition to representative government at least, if not responsible government, both of which were still held to be incompatible with Malta's status of a fortress. It was, therefore, worrying for a Governor to discover that a great proportion of the public servants under his charge

held views strongly divergent from those of HM's Government but, in conformity with those of persons agitating for political reform.

Le Marchant's alarm on this point was further strengthened by a private memorandum from the Crown Advocate, Sir Adrian Dingli, which demonstrated conclusively

'the influence, as electors, that can be exercised [because of their electoral strength] by the employees under Government, in voting in favour of the Elective Members of this Island.'[46]

This point was not lost on political activists in Malta who made civil servants an important objective for their propaganda and agitation. Indeed, the promise to strive for a more equitable salary structure for civil servants tended to be one of the permanent planks in the electoral platform of every candidate seeking election to Council.[47] Neither was the issue allowed to lose any of its vote winning appeal in-between election times for, as the minutes of the Council of Government show, elected members tended to take every opportunity that came their way to raise it.[48] But, because of their minority position in Council, it was not possible for elected representatives to carry their point.[49]

The conclusion reached by Le Marchant on reflecting over these various issues was, 'that a crisis had come', that the whole administrative system of government was 'utterly exhausted' and that it was rapidly grinding to a 'complete stand-still.'[50] He proposed, in the face of this alleged crisis, several solutions some of which were only partially successful. He proposed, first, to raise the salaries of a large category of civil servants. Second, that 'the old should be pensioned, [and] the young brought forward.'[51] Le Marchant contended that no improvement in the administration was possible until several Heads of Departments, whose ages ranged from 64 to 75 years, were retired from the service.[52] Some of the older heads were indeed retired from the service on the basis of their age[53] but, from the Governor's own admission, some five years later, it is clear that those whom he appointed in their place were not very much

their junior in age. Le Marchant wrote, in fact, in 1863, that

‘A greater part even of those officers thus selected are now becoming entitled by long service to their retirement and if they accept it the government will be placed in some embarrassment.’[54]

Third, the Governor proposed that several offices be consolidated and others, including the entire Public Works Department (PWD), be suppressed. For this reason, the Office of Inspector of Prisons was to be consolidated with that of Head of Police, while the Offices of Comptroller of Contracts and of Inspector of Charitable Institutions were to be consolidated under the title of Comptroller of Charitable Institutions.[55] Le Marchant claimed that his decision to suppress the entire Public Works Department was motivated by a desire to reduce government expenditure and to break the age-old Maltese habit of dependence on the government. The Governor had found on his arrival in Malta that local government spending on poor relief averaged about £24,000 annually, a sum in his opinion both ‘extravagant and wasteful’.[56] It was a situation similar to that which he had found in Newfoundland but which, during his six years as governor, he had reduced to £3,500. His efforts had earned him ‘the thanks of the whole community’[57] and the praise of Lord Grey at the Colonial Office.[58] He hoped to do the same in Malta and actually said so.

Public works, whether of a necessary character or merely to soak up unemployment during periods of severe depression, had always been one of the government’s chief concerns. Furthermore, the government owned large properties which required maintenance. What the Governor now proposed was to suppress the entire PWD and to put all public works schemes out to competition by tender.[59] Le Marchant hoped by this move to stimulate private endeavour, infuse a measure of competition into Malta’s domestic economy, and increase employment opportunities in the private sector. The Governor fully expected that his view that ‘the very existence of the Works Department was...opposed to free-trade’[60] would coincide with that of Colonial officials in London and in this he was not disappointed. But,

while this scheme was approved, the Secretary of State could not disguise his alarm at Le Marchant's declared intention of interfering with Malta's "Poor Law System".[61] Of course, local government efforts to 'check any extravagant or wasteful expenditure for the support of the poor'[62] were always to be encouraged, but the Secretary of State wished to impress upon the Governor 'the prudence of caution'[63] when it came to dealing with Malta's long established system of poor relief. Lytton feared that the Governor's measures would serve merely to create apprehension among the population for

'what might be safe [in Newfoundland]...might be very dangerous in an old state like that of Malta, in which scarcity is always to be apprehended.'[64]

This statement is in itself evidence of how well some colonial officials in London had come to understand the peculiar condition of dependence on external factors that characterized Malta's economy since the inception of British rule. Price has written that

'the years 1842-1865 were years of great economic fluctuation. In a matter sometimes of months the islands might be flung from one extreme to another, from the depths of poverty to the peak of prosperity.'[65]

The reasons he cites for this state of affairs are rarely of local origin. An upturn or downturn in imperial spending in Malta, depending on the likelihood or unlikelihood of war in the region; the long presence or absence of the fleet from Malta; an increase or fall in entreport trade, determined mainly by an upswing or downswing in the demand for cereals in neighbouring countries; or periods of relatively high or low prices for imports. This connection the Colonial Office appeared at last to be making. Thus, Le Marchant was strictly instructed not to proceed with any "poor law" reform until this had been laid before the Secretary of State for approval.[66]

The soundness of this advice was forcefully demonstrated to Le Marchant less than fifteen months later when, 'at a moment of great scarcity',[67] his government found itself compelled to purchase, from

overseas, stocks of grain for the use of the civilian population. The Maltese interpreted this action as proof of 'the vigilance and paternal care' of the Governor towards their interests and an example of 'a provident administration wholly directed to their welfare.'[68] It was, in fact, a measure and a language more suited to the first decades of British rule than to the decades of free trade, especially when it is recalled that any attempt by Governors, after 1838, to intervene in the grain market would have earned them the severe disapprobation of the Colonial Office. By contrast, in 1861, the Colonial Office tacitly recognized the inevitability of the measure.[69]

Within a short period of time the peculiar economic circumstances of Malta were also to defeat Le Marchant's reforms in the sphere of public works. The whole purpose behind the closure of the PWD had been to encourage groups of workers to combine together and compete for government contracts. But, apart from minor works of repair to government-owned properties, the type of works mostly required by government after 1859 were projects of a large scale character, such as the construction of a deep-water commercial harbour, the building of a new and larger dock, and the construction of a majestic Opera House. There was in Malta, however, very few contractors who possessed either the capital or the resources to undertake these projects. The result was that private monopoly, rather than competition, soon threatened Le Marchant's reforms. Thus, in 1861

'in order to prevent the various contracts for public works from falling into the hands of one or two contractors only',[70]

the Governor sought Treasury approval for dispensing with Colonial Regulations to be able to make advance payments to the 'non-capitalist contractors'.[71] He pleaded that his whole reform depended on this and that if his appeal was not approved, then the government would have to revert to the earlier system rather than allow itself to become hostage to a few private contractors. His plea failed to move the Treasury, not only because their Lordships were reluctant to sanction what in their view was



a dangerous precedent, but also because it was Le Marchant himself who, only months earlier, had decried the applicability of private enterprise concepts to Malta. At the time, the Governor had rejected Treasury criticism that the building and administration of an Opera House was a matter for private speculation with the argument that, 'out of England', governments are often faced with exceptional responsibilities and legislation.[72] The Opera House project was, he argued, exceptional for it was meant to provide a cultural alternative to 'dissipation and gambling'[73] and which only the government could provide. Treasury refusal spelled the end for his scheme and in the latter half of 1861 the Public Works Department was reconstituted.[74]

Finally, the Governor proposed, that all surplus clerks in a department should be gradually transferred, as opportunities arose, to other departments. Of the several offices earmarked by Le Marchant for reduction, those involving offices in the Chief Secretary's Department, but especially that of Assistant Secretary, deserves further comment. In his despatch of September 1858 the Governor had proposed the abolition of the office of Assistant Secretary to the Government and the merging of its duties with those of the Governor's own Private Secretary.[75] He justified this measure on two counts. First, 'a close study of the duties'[76] of the Chief Secretary's Department had revealed that the number of clerks in this office was too large. Second, that public opinion increasingly demanded the suppression of this surplus office and he himself could not 'offer one single excuse for its continuance.'[77] The most important duty performed by the Assistant Secretary was that of keeper of the official correspondence between the Governor and the Secretary of State for the Colonies and other Colonial Office officials. It was, consequently, an office of great trust and this officer was expected to assume, when the absence of his direct superior required it, the duties of Chief Secretary. But Le Marchant claimed that Mr Legh, the Assistant Secretary, had

delegated all responsibility over these important duties to junior clerks with the result that all 'correspondence of however confidential a nature with HM's Government, were accessible to all',[78] even to the public. This, he said, had served to undermine the authority and prestige of the local government in the eyes of the Maltese.

The evidence suggests, however, hidden motives on the part of the Governor. Indeed, it seems likely that Le Marchant intended these reductions both as a blow to the authority and public prestige of Victor Houlton, the Chief Secretary, and as a demonstration of his ultimate authority. The Governor's own comments point towards this conclusion. Le Marchant claimed, for example, that his predecessors had continued to allow the presence of a surplus number of clerks in the Chief Secretary's office 'under the false notion that any reduction...might lessen before the public the position of the Chief Secretary.'[79]

This was precisely the position that Houlton had adopted when, some years earlier, Governor Reid had decided to transfer one of these surplus clerks to another department.[80] In the dispute that followed, Houlton not only resisted Reid's decision, but was said to have assumed 'a position and authority not subordinate to, but almost co-equal with the Governor himself'.[81] Hence, the reduction and transfer of several clerks from the Chief Secretary's Department was probably intended as a show of authority by the Governor and of his readiness to wield that authority without hindrance. The Governor, apparently, expected his Chief Secretary to oppose his authority and was, therefore, determined to ostracize him from any share in the management of the colony by denying him access to any information which might make him privy to his plans. It was for this reason that he appealed to the Secretary of State to allow him to transfer responsibility for all official communications between himself and London to his own Private Secretary and to abolish the office of Assistant Secretary.

Lord Lytton, the Secretary of State, at first refused to approve this

arrangement. He pointed out to the Governor that the Office of Private Secretary, unlike that of Assistant Secretary, was a temporary appointment and that the officer holding it would be obliged to resign his post at the end of a governor's term of office. He also stressed, that entrusting these duties to the governor's Private Secretary, would give rise to the danger of official despatches being lost or mislaid, in itself a serious matter since despatches tended to serve as 'important...guides to the future policy of successive Governors.'[82] Furthermore, Lytton pointed to the obvious difficulties that defining the limits between public and private duties would entail and to the confusion and dispute that this may give rise to amongst the officers of government.[83]

The Governor stuck to his position but suggested that, in the event the Secretary of State continued to view the Office of Assistant Secretary as 'necessary and advisable for the interests of the Crown',[84] then 'the only arrangement' that would be acceptable to Maltese public opinion would be to appoint Wilford Brett, his Private Secretary, to that office. Lytton refused to sanction this proposal but accepted, by way of compromise, the Governor's earlier suggestion to abolish Legh's office and to transfer its duties to Brett. Le Marchant had won his point, but some time later his real intentions were exposed in a newspaper article and in a letter from four of the elected members to the Secretary of State.[85] Both statements made the point that the Chief Secretary had been pushed aside by the Governor and that it was the Private Secretary, who was 'without responsibility'[86] and the Crown Advocate who held the reins of government. As for Legh, for bearing the Governor's accusation of inefficiency without protest, his reward was promotion to the responsible situation of Auditor-General in place of William Thornton, one of the officers retired from the service on account of his old age.

Le Marchant distrusted the Maltese as much as he distrusted his Chief Secretary. It was a distrust born out of the 'strong line of demarcation

existing between the Maltese and the English'[87] which he witnessed in Malta. He observed that, despite almost sixty years of British rule, the habits of both communities remained so dissimilar 'that whether of the highest or the lower classes, not the slightest affinity of feeling exists between them.'[88] There was, he concluded, 'something very wrong' and feared that this situation would ultimately be exploited by other powers who had every interest to see Britain ousted from Malta. According to the Governor, this called for the reorganization of the existing, ill-paid and badly led, police force into an intelligence force, fully alert to the alleged dangers that seemed to threaten the fortress.

His plan was to retire Sedley, its Head, on a pension and to replace him with Hector Zimelli, a Maltese who was fluent in both English and Italian.[89] This was a controversial proposal for it was still felt in London that, for security purposes, the Head of Police should be a British officer. Le Marchant maintained that a British officer was of no use since what was required was an officer capable of personally watching over the various groups of European refugees living in Malta and over the comings and goings of Maltese migrants to North Africa. It was important, in his view, that the new officer should have his roots in the community, be conversant with their language and habits, and be socially acceptable to them.[90] Finally, he proposed to raise the salaries of all members of the police force and to subject them to a new code of regulations based on the British model.[91] Despite some misgivings, the Governor's proposals were ultimately approved by the Colonial Office, although in effect the new code was never implemented.

The elected members of Council, having as yet had no reason to suspect that the new Governor would not continue with William Reid's policy of deferring to their wishes in matters of domestic policy, cooperated freely with him. Thus, in January 1859, the Governor was able to report that his reforms in the public service of the island



MAP 8:1

'had been received with the most unanimous expression of gratification by the public and by all parties...and at the Council of Government...the Hon Dr Naudi, on behalf of the whole body of elected members...publicly gave expression to their thanks and concurrence',[92]

declaring at the same time 'their readiness to support the government in completing them' by voting the necessary funds. Later in the year support was also forthcoming from the elected members of Council for a number of costly public works some of which, the Governor admitted, many thought 'should be borne by the Imperial Government alone, and not drawn from the resources of the colony'.[93] Neither did the elected members attribute to the Governor any sinister motives for his appointment of Zimelli as Head of Police. Rather, they saw this measure as 'expressive of the confidence by which the Government at the present time meets and responds'[94] to their loyalty and as culmination of the long-awaited removal of all handicaps to promotion on Maltese public officers.

But the Governor 'was impatient of co-operative consultation in Council',[95] this being evident from his early despatches to the Secretary of State. Here he refers to the elected representatives on the Council, without reason or justification, as 'the members of the Opposition.'[96] Nor did he reappoint the three special committees of scrutiny on which the elected members held a majority and which had existed since the inception of the new Constitution of 1849.[97] Le Marchant was not prepared to share his authority with the elected members, a policy which he justified on the grounds that the Maltese represented 'more an Asiatic, than essentially a European people...in habit, feeling, as in character,'[98] thereby belonging to that category of peoples who 'require to be governed much more than they require to be represented.'[99]

A definite break between Governor and governed occurred in the autumn of 1859 when, following a series of bitter exchanges and confrontations between Le Marchant and Lt Gen Pennefeather, the Commander of the garrison, it was decided in London to vest, once again, all civil and military authority in the person of the Governor. This political retrogression

generated a great deal of ill-feeling towards the Governor among Malta's middle classes who, for almost fifty years, had campaigned for the separation of these two authorities and the appointment of a civil governor. In no time at all, the old arguments about bureaucratic influence over government, the threat to civil liberties, and how the Maltese educated classes resented being ranked below military officers, began to make their rounds again. But others saw in the restoration of military government - and rightly so - a serious obstacle to further constitutional advance and an informal movement was quickly set up to have this decision reversed.

In the Council elections of January 1860, despite alleged irregularities on the part of government, four members of this movement, Ruggero Sciortino, Fillippo Pullicino, Pasquale Mifsud and Francesco Torreggiani, captured four out of the eight seats reserved for elected representatives on the Council of Government.[100] The election of the "Four Lawyers" - as Le Marchant styled them[101] - meant that the Governor could no longer count on the support of all the elected members of Council. The four formed, in fact, for the first time in the history of the Council, an organized opposition to the Government. Le Marchant was not unduly perturbed since official members, as his subordinates, were obliged to vote according to his directions 'whatever their private opinions may happen to be.'[102] They were servants of the Crown and since the governor was its representative they were bound to uphold his authority.[103] Henceforth, Le Marchant made it a rule that, no matter how trivial the matter, official members of Council were to vote 'en bloc' according to his direction.[104] In all, in the period 1860-64, twenty one divisions were called for in the Council Chamber by the "opposition" and on eight separate occasions the measures proposed by the Governor were carried by the vote of the official majority alone, but with one or more of the elected members voting with the government in the other thirteen divisions.[105]

Matters came to a head in 1863 when the Governor employed the official vote to obtain formal approval from the Council for a further sum of £10,800 in excess of that already voted for the harbour works.[106] A petition, organized by the four lawyers and signed by Maltese from all sections of the population, was transmitted to London.[107] In it the petitioners, citing the grossly inaccurate estimates for the building of the Opera House and an Ospizio which had been presented in Council, complained that the existing Council provided no safeguard against financial mismanagement by the government and that the passing of money votes by the use of the official majority served merely to give the acts of government the semblance of legitimacy. Adrian Dingli, the Crown Advocate, who had piloted the original estimates through Council on behalf of the Governor, was accused of making a false statement in Council and of seeking, in collusion with Le Marchant, to deceive its members.[108] The government was further accused of having neglected the needs of the poor by proceeding with the building of an Opera House which was of interest only to the more prosperous inhabitants of Valletta. The petitioners demanded, therefore, that the Council be entrusted with

‘the real and effective power of controlling, without detriment to the interests of the Imperial Government, and under suitable provisions, the expenditure of the public money and the administration of the public landed property.’[109]

They also demanded the appointment of a civil governor and ‘the proper development of liberal institutions.’

The Governor’s abusive use of the official majority was not what the Colonial Office wanted or had hoped for. The presence on the Council of Government of a majority composed of government officers was intended to protect imperial interests in Malta if ever they needed protection. But ultimately, the Crown could always legislate for Malta by means of an Order-in-Council. These powers, however, were seen in London as powers of last resort. In every other aspect the local government was to conduct its administration, as far as possible, according to the wishes ‘of the



intelligent and educated'[110] section of the inhabitants as represented in Council by their elected representatives. This was the official view, the Colonial Office view, and it was on this basis that in September 1864 Secretary of State Cardwell laid down the rule that it was

'the desire of HM's Government that the principle should never be lost sight of by those who administer the Government of Malta, that great consideration should be shown to the opinions of the Elected members of Council in matters of local and domestic interest, and that above all no vote of money should be pressed against the majority of the Elected members except under very special circumstances in which the public interest or credit were seriously at stake and never without an immediate report to the Secretary of State.'[111]

The elected members had won an important concession if not victory. The Governor's behaviour had been publicly repudiated by London while near total control over public expenditure had been extended to a majority, (i.e. five out of eight), of the elected members. To some extent this readiness on the part of Britain to allow Maltese elected representatives such wide influence and control over the government - influence and control to be found only in the self-governing dominions or colonies with representative government - made Malta somewhat unique among Crown Colonies. In the years to come Cardwell's rule was to result in the public censure of other governors but it was also to become the basis of much difficulty for the Colonial Office itself.

None arose, however, in the next three years during Sir Henry Storks', Le Marchant's successor, short administration of Malta. Storks, also a military officer, was appointed Governor and Commander in Chief of Malta in October 1864 at a time when great changes were taking place in the Mediterranean and in Europe. Italian unification was edging closer while, in the eastern Mediterranean, the Suez Canal Project was at an advanced stage and its construction promised to make the Mediterranean an important commercial route to the Far East.[112] Britain had just ceded the Ionian Islands to Greece and Malta was Britain's sole remaining possession in the Mediterranean.[113] The island had become the navy's Mediterranean home, supply depot and repair base. The Admiralty's presence in the Grand Harbour

was expanding rapidly with new property being taken over for naval purposes every year. A new and larger dock was being built and other facilities extended. British imperial spending in Malta, though below that of 1856, had once again risen to approximately £500,000 per annum (see Diagram 8:1). The number of Maltese employed with the services in the harbour areas was increasing daily with the population becoming more concentrated around Valletta and the Three Cities[114](see Map 8:2). Others, in the farming community, were encouraged to return to the cultivation of cotton, their ancient staple, as a result of the cotton famine produced by the American Civil War. According to Price, by 1863

‘the acreage under cotton had more than doubled and that for five happy years the farming community enjoyed conditions unheard of since the 18th century.’[115] (see Map 8:3).

Each of these developments appeared to enhance Malta’s position and role for British interests in the Mediterranean and beyond. It was, therefore, of some importance that the administration of Malta should be conducted smoothly and with as little irritation to Maltese interests as possible.

Although the elections of January 1865 had returned, with one exception, candidates who had supported the petition of 1864 and who were said to ‘belong to what is called the opposition,’[116] the Governor was determined to work closely with them. He wrote Cardwell, in June 1865, that he

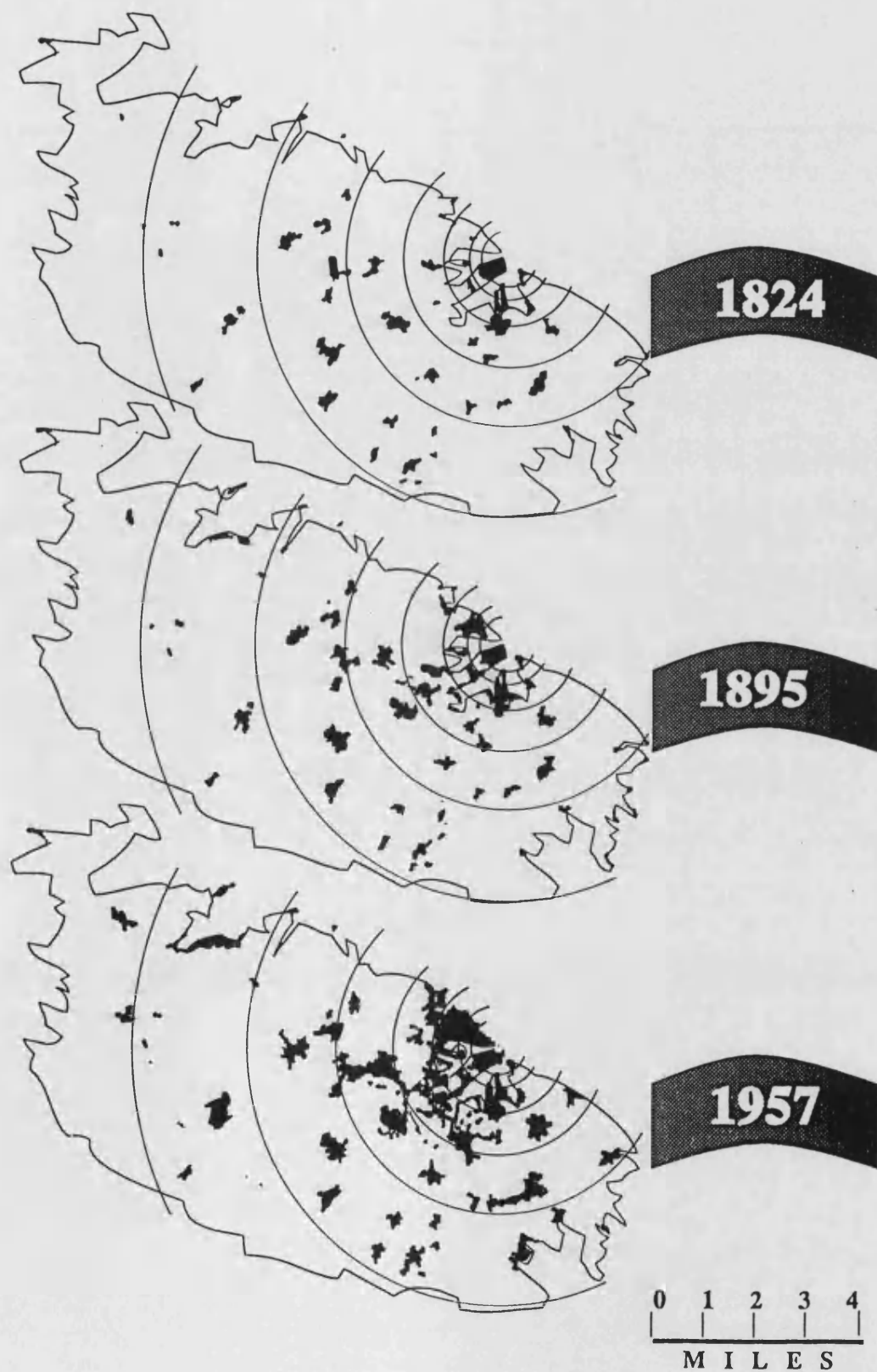
‘thought it right to associate the Elected Members of Council in all the proposals of the Government, both as regards legislation and works.’[117]

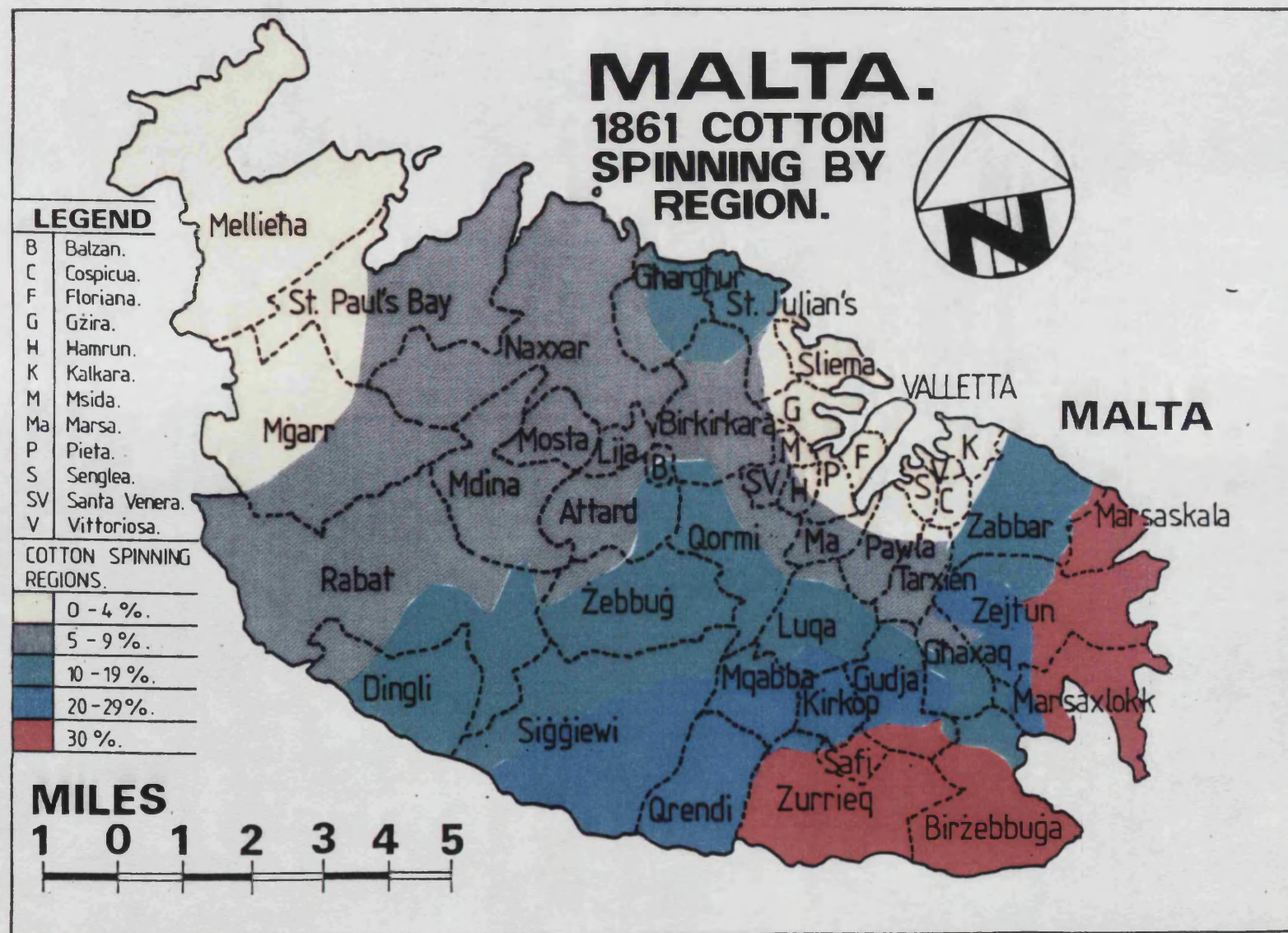
This he did by reverting to the old system of creating "Select Committees" to consider measures proposed by the government, and ‘generally, if not always, by giving them [elected members] a majority of the votes.’[118] The elected members responded positively to his approach and he was able to report that

‘the best understanding exists amongst all the Members of the Legislative Body...[and]between the Governing and the Governed.’[119]

As a result ‘much useful legislation [had] been accomplished’ while

## THE SPREAD OF SETTLEMENTS IN MALTA





MAP 8:3

‘liberal provision’[120] - around £65,000 in salaries and £75,000 in voted services [121] - had ‘been made for the public service.’[122] Furthermore, ‘the proceedings of the Council and all its discussions [had] been marked by great good feeling, by a sincere desire to act for the benefit and interests of the public welfare and by a conciliatory spirit of concession...the mainspring of all Constitutional Institutions.’[123]

Permanent officials at the Colonial Office, who some months earlier had dismissed the elected members as ‘place-hunters’[124] and as unfit even for limited electoral representation, were now delighted and realised that admitting the elected representatives as partners in government tended to have a salutary effect on the administration and was much more advantageous than treating them as an unnecessary nuisance. ‘Certainly it is very satisfactory’, was the comment of Secretary of State Cardwell who had exhibited greater faith in the elected members than most of his officials. ‘Sir Storks has shown confidence in the Elected Members, which was not the case under the former regime.’[125]

By his policy Storks managed to somewhat "rehabilitate" the civil service in the eyes of the general public. Under Le Marchant, Heads of Departments, especially Adrian Dingli, the Crown Advocate, and those holding a seat on the Council had become the frequent target of attacks from the elected members and from the press, which was generally hostile to the government. Many of the government measures were attributed to them personally, rather than to the Governor.[126] In contrast, the method adopted by Storks made of the elected members, not an opposition, but active participants in the decision-making process. This was acknowledged by the elected members themselves who, in a letter to the Secretary of State, spoke of ‘the cordial and conciliatory spirit’[127] with which he [Storks] conducted the affairs of government. They also stressed that ‘under his administration each functionary discharged exclusively the duties attached to his office...and no person interfered in the business dependent on other departments...’[128]

Finally ‘matters requiring close enquiry or that might have given rise to serious conflicts were committed’ to select committees to resolve.[129] The

outcome was, that as responsibility for policy was shared with the elected members, Heads of Departments automatically became less identifiable with the policies of the government and thus, also less of a target for newspaper attacks.

Storks also restored confidence in the examination system for entry into the Civil Service. Le Marchant had replaced, as we have seen earlier, open competition with nomination and competition.[130] It was an act which had ingrained in the minds of a generally mistrustful population the belief that patronage over government offices had been informally reinstituted.[131] Storks, on his part, did not formally abandon the principle of nomination before competition, this being the system preferred by the Colonial Office,[132] but he never actually followed it. A government notice published in January 1865, soon after Storks arrival in Malta, in announcing the government's intention to hold Civil Service examinations, merely stated that 'candidates wishing to compete' were 'required to send their names with certificates of their age to the Chief Secretary's Office.'[133] The phrase 'must seek nomination' was left out. The only condition that candidates had to fulfil was that they should be 25 years of age or under.[134]

The Governor also rationalized the whole examination system. He reduced from fifteen to ten the number of subjects which formed the basis of the examination syllabus and divided the examination in two parts. Part One was to consist of four obligatory subjects and part Two of the remaining six subjects which were, however, voluntary. Candidates who failed in any of the subjects set for Part One, namely English, Italian, Arithmetic and Handwriting, were to be considered as having failed the examination.[135] In that same year efforts were made to raise the standard of candidates who sat for civil service examinations. In May, a notice which appeared in the Government Gazette, announced that 'to afford [candidates] sufficient time for preparation',[136] as henceforth 'better

standards were expected' from applicants, 'two competitive examinations' were to be held annually, one in May and one in November. At every session the first four candidates, according to their order of merit, were to be appointed to the public service as vacancies occurred. In October, a second notice announced that, in order to remove any indifference on the part of candidates with respect to the voluntary subjects, it was decided that, starting from the November session, a minimum passmark of sixty marks was being set for each voluntary subject taken. Marks below this minimum were to be excluded from a candidate's final total which determined his overall placing.[137]

Finally, public confidence in the whole examination system was further enhanced by a public show of impartiality. In the May 1865 session the results of the examination for clerkships were published along with a report from the Commission of Examinations, which also presented to the Chief Secretary the original examination scripts for the purpose of scrutiny should the need arise.[138] In the autumn session, examiners went one step further by returning, to the Commission of Examinations, the unopened and sealed envelope which contained the original index numbers of the candidates, as well as the corrected original examination scripts of candidates.[139]

Towards the end of March 1867, Storks was recalled to London to assist with the army reforms then in progress.[140] His parting observations from Malta, especially with regard to public expenditure, are worth recording here for they were to have a prophetic ring about them some years later when high rates of expenditure, over a period of successive years, were to bring the island to the brink of bankruptcy. Storks began by noting that the revenue of Malta averaged about £160,000 per annum, out of which, around £140,000 were spent on salaries and public services.[141] Yet, in just over six years the local government had spent several hundred thousand pounds on public utilities. On their own 'the Great Harbour works and the



New Theatre' or Opera House, had already cost 'in round numbers'[142] £140,000, and greater sums were still required for the former. 'Both undertakings' were, according to Storks, 'of questionable utility and neither of absolute necessity.' He felt it incumbent on himself, therefore, to place on record his opinion

'that works of magnitude should be undertaken unless of the most urgent necessity and they should be paid for by moderate annual charges on the revenue of each year. Any other system is inconsistent with the limited revenue of Malta and would lead if persisted in to great financial embarrassment.'[143]

#### CREEPING IMPERIALISM

The Maltese were sorry to see the Governor go. In a letter to the Duke of Buckingham, the newly appointed Secretary of State for the Colonies, the elected representatives declared that, under Storks, the population had

'for a moment...forgotten the necessity of having the administration of the country directed by a Civil Governor',[144]

but the reattainment of which, they were still committed to pursue. For his part Storks saw no reason 'why the same good feeling' that had characterized his administration

'should not be maintained provided that consideration for the wishes of the elected members in all matters of expenditure, combined with judicious firmness be shown in the management of the Council...'[145]

Storks was fortunate, however, that his term of office was short - three years - and that almost one-third of it had been taken up by the affairs of Jamaica.[146] Even so, during his administration serious problems of a social and economic nature arose, including a cholera epidemic which brought to attention the gravely insanitary condition of Valletta and the Three Cities, and a three year drought which, coinciding as it did with the collapse of the cotton boom, reduced the population in the agricultural districts of Malta and Gozo to destitution. Storks bequeathed to his successor, Patrick Grant, who arrived in Malta in the summer of 1867, the task of finding solutions to these grave problems.

But some of Grant's early political difficulties arose from another problem which he inherited from Storks, i.e. from the latter's decision to



grant the Auditor-General an annual increase of salary of £100, without first bringing the proposal before Council. The Secretary of State had approved the measure and Grant, who in the meantime had replaced Storks, was instructed to proceed accordingly.[147]

The elected members, however, challenged the Governor's right to alter salaries without the approval of Council and demanded that the decision be reversed.[148] They acknowledged that Governor Grant was not responsible for the measure but were adamant that 'its effects will be to weaken again that reliance on the efficiency of the Council of Government which', owing to their exertions, 'it had on the part of the people obtained since Mr Cardwell's ruling'.[149] The Civil list of Malta was first established in 1848 and formed an integral part of the Constitution granted to the island in that year. According to the Letters Patent, no variations or modifications of the Civil List could be effected without a legal enactment in Council and without the assent of the Crown.

The Maltese were conceded their point, but the new Secretary of State was not prepared to withdraw the sanction of his predecessor and directed that a resolution should be presented in Council which would properly regulate the increase of salary granted to Legh. For the future, 'all alterations of or additions to the salaries and allowances or modification of the services enumerated in the Civil List' were to be brought before Council for approval or rejection.[150] Three of the elected members felt satisfied that the essential principle had been conceded.[151] Not so with the remaining five who, in protest, resigned their seats on the Council, stood for re-election and were returned. Agitation, fomented by some of the newspapers, continued and by July 1869 another petition was on its way to London.[152]

The three members who had retained their seats also came in for severe criticism and at the next elections they were defeated and replaced by more radical candidates.[153] Rogers, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the

Colonial Officer, concerned with developments at Malta, advised his superiors not to allow further "deterioration" with the full authority of the Governor. But neither Monsell, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, nor Earl Granville who in December 1868 had stepped into the role of Secretary of State, were prepared to go back on Cardwell's instruction. The former formally affirmed, in the House of Commons, that in local affairs the will of elected members in Malta 'should be in almost everything supreme'.<sup>[154]</sup> Granville for his part promised to take 'the desire of the Maltese community' into consideration as to whether a civilian or military officer should be appointed Governor.<sup>[155]</sup>

From this distance it may seem that this issue had attracted needless importance when, in fact, it serves to demonstrate how fearful the elected members were of any attempt by the local administration to usurp their political powers. The distrust which existed between the two sides was apparently such, that nothing but the withdrawal of the measure was acceptable to the elected members and their electors. This is an important point which helps to explain the intensity which characterized later conflicts between the political and the administrative elites. Nonetheless, it was a point which Grant appears to have missed, for in the first two years of his administration, he employed the official majority in Council on no less than nine occasions.<sup>[156]</sup> In January 1869 the elected members responded by calling, in Council, for a general increase in the salaries of public servants,<sup>[157]</sup> seeking thereby, to embarrass the government with its own employees and to create divisions between Heads of Departments, who were Council members, and their subordinates. It was a strategy which, as we shall see in other Chapters, the elected members were to repeat in later contests.

The government, which was already paying out over £65,000 annually, or nearly one-half of its revenue, in salaries<sup>[158]</sup> was not in a position to meet their demand. The projects which Governor Grant had inherited from his

predecessors had continued to absorb large portions of government funds.[159] Another £20,000 had been spent in 1867 on poor relief and works aimed at improving the water supply in an attempt to meet the emergency caused by the droughts of 1865-7.[160] To make matters worse, after 1868 the government experienced a sharp drop in its revenues. In the first instance, to alleviate the plight of the farmers, the government had been constrained to forfeit the rents due to it from its own tenants. But drought was succeeded by bumper crops and this too had an adverse effect on the government revenue. At least three-fifths of the public revenue was derived from import duties of which the duties on grain formed the bulk. Between 1868 and 1871, as a result of the 'diminution of demand for imported cereals',[161] this revenue fell by an average of £10,000 a year. Consequently, by May 1871, the government of Malta had a deficit of £30,000.[162] Thus, while the Governor was prepared to acknowledge that many of the salaries of public servants were on the low side and that, in principle, there was some justice for a demand for an increase in salaries,[163] he also thought

'that it would be imprudent to add to the already high fixed expenditure of the local establishments of this Government,'[164]

and had no choice but to veto the motion.

In London, apparently, colonial officials had forgotten about the intimate connection between the revenue of the island and the tax on grain, the staple food of the bulk of the population.[165] Secretary of State Granville found it 'strange that good harvests in Malta should have continuously reduced the receipts.'[166] Others were simply horrified, as Austin and Lewis had been in the 1830s, to discover that by and large the salaries of public servants in Malta were financed from a tax charged on the food of the labouring poor.[167] Monsell advised his superior not 'to consent to the proposal for raising salaries'.[168] He proposed instead that the Governor should be instructed to draw up a statement which would show 'the undue proportion of the revenue which is absorbed by salaries',

and to place it before the elected members of Council. The Governor should also be asked to

'suggest the abolition of many useless offices and the raising of the salaries, which are generally low, of the offices that would remain, [but] only when the process has been carried out.' [169]

The Governor agreed that there were 'several offices which as vacancies occur might be suppressed.' He also intimated that

'several of the older employees, whose conduct is exemplary and who are still qualified for the discharge of their duties, might elect to retire' [170]

provided that the Treasury in London was prepared, 'on the plea that their tenure of office was terminated on grounds of public policy', to award them a pension rather higher than they would normally receive. Others, the Governor continued, who were not on the fixed establishment, but who had served in their respective offices for a substantial number of years and whose services were no longer required, might also be induced to retire if they were granted an allowance for each year they had served. Without any of these concessions, Grant wrote to Granville,

'I doubt whether I should succeed in obtaining the consent of the Council to any scheme that I might otherwise propose.' [171]

Treasury officials, however, as on other occasions, refused to allow any departure from normal practice and once again the opportunity for reform in Malta was lost. [172] Indeed, until 1878, six years after Grant had retired from Malta, matters remained virtually the same.

Patrick Grant's administration of Malta had not been an easy one. The affair over Legh's salary increase, though not of his doing, had soured relations with the elected members and, in time, had resulted in a Council dominated by radicals. These radicals were determined to oppose the government and Cardwell's instruction provided them with the means for obstructing its programmes. In July 1870, for example, the necessity of completing the new commercial harbour compelled the Governor to pass, with the aid of the official majority in Council, a money vote amounting to just over £12,000. On this occasion, however, Lord Kimberley who had replaced

Granville as Secretary of State for the colonies in that very same month, supported the Governor, arguing that the completion of the harbour works was one of those special and exceptional cases contemplated in Cardwell's instruction.[173] The sanitary condition of the towns had also decidedly worsened, the Governor's own son falling victim to cholera.[174] As early as 1867 the Governor had reported that, 'exclusive...of the number of troops',[175] the population of Valletta and the Three Cities amounted to just under 60,000 souls or nearly half the total population of Malta. A report prepared for the government had estimated that a scheme to introduce a proper system of drainage in these towns 'would involve an outlay of fully one million sterling',[176] a sum beyond the meagre resources of the islands.

When, in June 1872, Sir Charles Van Straubenzee took over from Grant as Governor of Malta, most of these problems were still seen by colonial officials as Maltese problems, having little or no connection with imperial interests in the colony. Pleas from successive Governors to be allowed to organize schemes for Maltese emigration or to purchase and store stocks of grain for use during an emergency because

'of the danger to a first class Fortress from an exuberant and increasing population...mainly if not entirely dependent on importation for its supply of food',[177]

were not approved. To be fair, colonial officials did show some interest in the proposal to establish a government grain reserve at Malta but, when the motion was rejected by the elected members on the ground that it was an imperial matter to be realized with imperial funds, some of this interest waned.[178] Similarly, while a wider diffusion of English among the Maltese would have been considered both welcome and gratifying, colonial officials found Grant's determination to save a private school, founded by two English sisters for the purpose of spreading knowledge of English among Malta's middle classes, vexing. Grant had argued that the school should be 'maintained in the interests, both of the local and Imperial

Government',[179] but the Secretary of State was of the view that the best thing that could have happened was 'that this school should have died a natural death'.[180]

Despite Malta's strategic importance and advice to the contrary from his Permanent Secretary, Lord Kimberley was set to continue with the policy of his predecessors of allowing Malta to manage its affairs 'very much as they would be if Malta had real representative institutions'.[181] The full import of this policy was brought home to Straubenzee, the new Governor, in no uncertain manner in May 1873. The issue concerned the passing, against the opposition of five (a majority) elected members, a resolution in favour of accepting a particular tender for the organization of a postal service between Malta and Sicily.[182] Kimberley held that the question involved no imperial interests and that the vote, therefore, came clearly within the terms of Cardwell's instruction. He had, in the circumstances, no alternative but to disapprove the Governor's action and to direct him to inform the Council accordingly.[183] Straubenzee invited the Secretary of State to reflect on the consequences of his decision once the latter's despatch became public. It would, he said, 'place the whole of the Government in the hands'[184] of any five members of Council who were intent in opposing any measure involving public expenditure.

'It would...damp the zeal of the official members, on whose integrity and devoted attention to duties of their respective Departments, the good management of public affairs...solely-depends.'[185]

He concluded that,

'it must in the end, bring most of the Heads...to look - as I believe, many of the subordinate officers already do - to the elected leader of any five of the eight elected members of Council, as the person whom they have to please'.[186]

Despite such strong arguments, however, Kimberley refused to be moved and his reply to Straubenzee is worth reproducing here because it was to be the last occasion, until 1921, on which the Colonial Office was to show a liberal attitude to Malta. 'I am' wrote Kimberley,

'sorry indeed that the Government should be weakened but I think it will be

far more weakened by not adhering to a promise made as that made by Mr Cardwell, than by our telling the Government publicly that they have erred...[for] the unofficial members...have a right to expect that as long as Mr Carwell's instructions remain in force, the Secretary of State will attend to their remonstrances against any departure from them.'[187]

After 1874 this policy was to begin to change dramatically. The distinction between what in Malta constituted local or imperial matters narrowed rapidly. By contrast to earlier years, emigration, wheat reserves, sanitation, education and language were all soon to become imperial matters. In this context Cardwell's rule became an anachronism and although in theory it remained in force for a few more years, the time of its rescission was very close. The reasons for this are to be mainly found in the events of the time. In the 1870s, as already observed, the political and economic development of European nations was at a stage where they could begin to challenge Britain's supremacy and seriously threaten her interests throughout the world. Bernard Porter has written that the

'portents...of that atmosphere of jealous international rivalry which surrounded the later, more competitive period of colonial expansion'[188]

were already there at this time. In Europe, Prussia had not only established itself as a military power in its own right but had, in 1864, contemptuously brushed aside British warnings against Prussian annexation of the Danish Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein.[189] In the Mediterranean, closer to Malta, British supremacy was being challenged by French expansion in North Africa and, to a lesser extent, the emergence of a unified Italy as a new Mediterranean power. Consequently, apprehension in Britain was growing fast. England, wrote John Ruskin in 1870, must either found more colonies 'as fast and as far as she is able'[190] or 'perish'. For Disraeli the stark choice that faced Britain was between decline and empire.[191] To survive the challenge Britain had to be prepared economically and militarily.

It was axiomatic, therefore, that British defence outposts were to play an important role and for this strategy to be effective, in almost everything, military and imperial considerations had to take priority over

civil matters. This can be seen to be true not only of Malta, but in other fortresses as well. Thus, in his study of Aden under British rule, Garvin notes that, from around this period onwards, but principally after 1880, when applied to Aden the term "fortress" was used as something more than a mere descriptive term.

'It was a statement of policy. It meant that military security was given absolute priority over all other considerations and in this sense it did represent something of an innovation. When Aden had first been occupied it had been [like Malta] regarded as a centre of commercial influence as well as a military base.' [192]

Similar, as in Malta, because of this fortress policy, every additional inhabitant was regarded 'as a nuisance and a further mouth to feed in time of siege.' [193]

Although this policy became more evident when in 1874 Disraeli and Carnarvon became Prime Minister and Secretary of State for the Colonies respectively, in Malta some changes had already manifested themselves even under liberal administrations. The expansion of military and naval facilities, for example, had been proceeding steadily throughout the 60s and early 70s. Apart from a new and larger naval dock, opened in 1871, and other harbour works, defence works were going up all over the island. [194] (See Map 8:4) By these developments the nature of the defence of Malta, as well as the impact of the fortress on the civil population, had reached a new dimension. Now, three-quarters of the island, and almost the entire population, were included within the territory to be defended. The "fortress" no longer implied the immediate vicinity of the Grand Harbour, but practically the whole island. [195] Thus, as the world situation gradually changed so did that of Malta. It was hardly any more the era of Grey, Gladstone or Kimberley but of politicians with a robust sense of imperialism, such as Disraeli, Carnarvon and later Chamberlain and Churchill.

The formal reassertion of the fortress policy and the first authoritative departure from Cardwell's rule took place within months of



## New British Fortifications in Malta: 1860-1885



Lord Carnarvon stepping into the Colonial Office. In Malta, the Governor and his colleagues had been stung by the rejection, in Council, of a scheme which would have facilitated Maltese emigration to the Carribean. Emigration was held by government officials to be imperative if overpopulation in the towns - the cause of their insanitary condition - was to be reduced. This, at least, had been one of the conclusions reached by a Commission appointed by the Governor in 1874 to inquire into the causes of distress in the island, but particularly to investigate the alarming jump in the death rate that had taken place within the space of one year.[196] Matters were further complicated when the elected members refused to pass the votes for an improvement in the drainage system of Valletta and the Three Cities. Straubenzee was not prepared to tolerate this and, with the support of the official members, pushed the estimates through Council.[197]

The immediate reaction in London was to support the Governor. The drainage question, wrote the Secretary of State, was one of vital importance 'not only to the local community but to the health of the Imperial forces.'[198] Herbert, the Permanent Under-Secretary, in his minute to Carnarvon decried 'Mr Cardwell's unfortunate instruction' which, in his view, divested 'the Crown of power and prestige which it is especially necessary that it should possess in Malta.'[199] He agreed with the Governor on the need for 'a more liberal interpretation in favour of the Governor being given to Mr Cardwell's Despatch'[200] limiting the power of the elected members 'to purely local matters of minor interest.'[201] Herbert's view coincided with that of Houlton and other senior government officials in Malta who had never been quite happy at having elected members invited to share in the policy process. Indeed, an attempt to have Cardwell's rule rescinded was made, at the instigation of Houlton, as early as 1866 when Storks was away on Colonial Office business in Jamaica.[202] But at the time the suggestion was dismissed without even a comment. This time, however, Houlton went further arguing that 'the Maltese are

Oriental's'[203] and therefore, entirely unfit for any share in decision-making.[204]

The Secretary of State concurred with the view of his Permanent Secretary. In May 1875 he informed the Governor and the elected members that he considered it

'fatal to the sound administration of public affairs and to the true interests of the community...[that] sole responsibility of deciding important questions...in many cases involving much larger interests'[205]

should be left to a small number of elected members. While great consideration was to be shown to the opinion of elected members, the government had the duty to 'prevent an unsafe decision being arrived at by using, in the last resort, the votes of the Official Members.' Furthermore, the Governor was not,

'in every case which might affect the interests of the fortress or navy or even visitors to the island...[to] hesitate to use [the] Official Majority.'[206]

The result was that the ultimate responsibility for governing was now weighted in favour of the Governor and Heads of Departments.

Free from political constraints the local government was now in a position to direct its attention to emigration and the improvement of the sanitary condition of the towns. But the finances of the colony were hardly such as to allow it to do so. Neither were the alternatives for procuring the funds encouraging. It could either raise fresh taxes or cut down, in a large way, on the number of offices to be found in the public service. Whichever course the government chose there was bound to be an outcry. Of the two options, London favoured the second. Straubenzee was less certain. He explained to the Secretary of State that although the civil establishments of Malta were organized on a scale exceeding the real wants of the public service, 'the want of employment for young men'[207] who had received an education induced many to compete for clerkships in the civil service. Indeed, such was the demand that, in May 1875, on

'the occurrence of a vacancy of one of the less valuable clerkships at only £50 per annum, there were 50 candidates for it.'[208]

He also reminded Lord Carnarvon that the government had done nothing to carry into effect a promise it had made, following a demand for a salary increase 'from the whole, or nearly so, of the clerical employes under this government',[209] to 'adjust inequalities in the service whenever an opportunity offered'[210] itself. In fact, he thought that the time had come for the government to honour that promise and he was taking advantage of the death of Legh, the Auditor-General, to put before Council a scheme which would raise the salaries of all the lowest paid clerks. He proposed also to raise the salary of the Chief Secretary by £300 per annum.

Herbert advised Carnarvon to approve the scheme, intimating to the Governor, however, that it should not be considered as a final one, as the Secretary of State was considering 'so reorganizing the service as to admit of the employment of fewer persons.'[211] Carnarvon was not, however, convinced of the proposal to abolish the office of Auditor-General. He told the Governor that

'the office of Auditor-General appears to be one which from strong reasons ought not to be suppressed...as upon the Audit depends the effective financial administration of the Government.'[212]

Furthermore, the abolition of the office would have meant the loss of 'the presence of an Englishman' on the Council at a time when it appeared to be 'very important to maintain the number of English members.'[213] For the purpose of retrenchment Straubenzee was instructed to look at other offices.

Nonetheless, the Governor's scheme raised several questions in the minds of Colonial officials. Was it not time that the government looked to other sources than the grain tax to secure its revenue, especially when it was apparent that, those who contributed most were the least capable of affording it? Was it not time to inquire whether it was at all possible to change the bias of the education system in Malta in a way to better equip Maltese young men to rely on their own efforts to advance their fortune?

Would not a wider diffusion of the English language serve to encourage a great readiness for groups of Maltese to emigrate and for others to seek their fortune in other parts of the empire? Would not an anglicized Maltese nation also offer greater security for Britain's naval base in the Mediterranean? Should action be taken, despite the failure of earlier schemes, notably those of Le Marchant, to trim government establishments in Malta in a comprehensive and systematic manner? To answer these questions in the years 1877-8 no less than three Commissioners were sent out to Malta. Francis Rowsell, the first to be appointed, was charged with investigating the system of taxation in Malta and to recommend reforms; Patrick Keenan to inquire into the education system and to advise how best to advance the study of English; and Penrose Julyan, who was charged with inquiring into every aspect of Maltese public administration and to suggest reforms. The work of these three Commissioners will form the subject of the following Chapter, although our main focus will be on the Julyan Report.

Having said that, however, it must be noted that the appointment of these Commissioners was an indication that the Colonial Office was prepared to assume greater responsibility for the administration of Malta. The policy of deferring to the wishes of the Maltese representatives, as had been the case under liberal ministries, was coming to its end. The new approach was summed by Lord Carnarvon in a speech in 1878. In 'military posts' such as Malta, he said, 'the whole of the Civil Government has to be discharged by the Colonial Office.' [214] Local autonomy under such conditions was both incompatible and impossible. Imperialism had to hold sway. This will become apparent in Chapter Ten after we have examined the reports of the Commissioners.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Grey to More O'Ferrall, 22 May 1849, C.O.159/23, PRO, Kew.
2. The colonies were seen by many in Britain as a burden rather than an advantage to the country. Divesting Britain from this burden seemed calculated, in their eyes, to advance and strengthen Britain's dominant

role in Europe and elsewhere. Goldwin Smith remarks, regarding French efforts to expand their empire, are indicative of this mood: "We are told that the Emperor [Napoleon III]...envies our Colonial Empire, and desires a Colonial Empire of his own. Let us pray that he may obtain it. Nothing else can prevent him from being quite, as he is now almost, master of the destinies of Europe." Quoted in K.E. Knorr, (1963), *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, Frank Cass, London, p.361; see also P. Knaplund, (1927), *Gladstone and Britain's Imperial Policy*, Allen & Unwin, pp.32-42 and pp.43-45.

3. H.I. Lee, (1972), *Malta 1813-1914: A Study in Constitutional and Strategic Development*, Progress Press, Valletta, pp.159-60.

4. Like Reid, his predecessor, Le Marchant was a military officer but also like Reid his responsibilities were civil in character. The command of the fortress was at the time vested in Gen. Pennefeather's hands.

5. See, for example, Grey to More O'Ferrall, 19 May 1848, C.O.159/23, and Elliott min. on Grant to Buckingham, 29 Feb. 1868, C.O.158/215, for a restatement of this view. See also for view as to the "spirit" of the Constitution, Kimberley min. of 8 Jun. 1873 on Straubenzee to Kimberley, 23 May 1873, C.O.158/235, PRO, Kew.

6. Cardwell to Le Marchant, 19 Sept. 1864, C.O.159/27, PRO, Kew.

7. Min. of 7 Jun. 1873, by Kimberley, on Straubenzee to Kimberley, 23 May 1873, C.O.158/235, PRO, Kew.

8. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.

9. Ibid.

10. A.V. Laferla, (1946), *British Malta, Aquilina & Co, Valletta, Vol.I*, p.233 n.1.

11. Earl Grey, (1853), *The Colonial Policy of Lord John Russell's Administration*, Richard Bentley, London, Vol.I, pp.298-9.

12. D.K. Fieldhouse, (1982), (2nd ed), *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteen Century*, Macmillan, London, p.257.

13. Laferla, op.cit., Vol.I, p.233 expresses this same view but in a rather milder form.

14. Ibid., p.233.

15. See Chapter Seven.

16. Le Marchant to Newcastle, 19 Apr. 1861, C.O.158/193, and Le Marchant to Newcastle, 30 Jan. 1864, C.O.158/202, PRO, Kew.

17. See *Malta Government Gazette*, No. 1977, 4 Nov. 1858, C.O.162/16, PRO, Kew.

18. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Austin and Lewis to Glenelg, 19 Feb. 1838, Report Relative to the Employment of Maltese in Executive Offices, C.O.158/115, PRO, Kew.
22. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
23. The two main reforms, as we have seen, were the appointment of a Civil Governor and the grant of a partially elected Council of Government.
24. See Chapter Seven.
25. C. Price, (1954), Malta and the Maltese, A Study in Nineteenth Century Migration, Georgian House, Melbourne, p.107.
26. Ibid., p.107.
27. See Chapter Seven.
28. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
29. As was seen in the previous Chapter, Governors were inundated by petitions from individuals seeking offices. By 1880, however, little had changed and if anything competition had made professional interest in Civil Service offices more attractive. See Parl. Paper XLIX (1880), C-2684, p.39 et.seq.
30. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
31. The case of Adrian Dingli, although by no means an isolated case, provides a classical example of such attitudes. Considered by most as the finest legal mind in the Island, having studied in Malta, Britain and on the Continent, in 1854, at a relatively young age Dingli accepted the office of Crown Advocate, an office which ranked below that of a Judge in both salary and status. At the same time he abandoned a thriving private practice.
32. As the numbers of under-employed doctors and lawyers increased so did criticism of the education system increase. Many were of the view that a new emphasis, mainly technical, was required in education if education was to satisfy demands for employment.
33. We shall see in Chapter Ten that as the number of civil service offices and the number of candidates for these offices grew more and more disproportionate a campaign was launched to persuade Britain to allow the holding of examinations for the Home and Indian Civil Service and for Commissions in the Army, in Malta.
34. For attempts by Governors and others to introduce a pension scheme for Maltese public servants see Chapter Four and Five.
35. A schedule of the services performed by public servants who sought retirement from the service was sent to the Treasury in London. It was this body which determined the allowances that Maltese public servants were to receive on retirement. These allowances were granted, in the interests of economy, at such low rates that, very often, Governors found it necessary to make a second appeal on behalf of retiring public servants for an improved rate.
36. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Mitrovich to Stanley, 22 May 1858, C.O.158/186, PRO, Kew.
43. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
44. Trevelyan to Labouchere, 30 Sept. 1857, C.O.158/183, PRO, Kew.
45. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
46. Dingli Memorandum enclosed with above.
47. Mitrovich to Stanley, encl. in Reid to Stanley, 22 May 1858, C.O.158/186, PRO, Kew.
48. See, for example, Debates of Council of Government, Sitting 18, 17 Jan. 1856 and Sitting 29, of 18 Jun. 1856 in C.O.161/26. PRO, Kew.
49. Mitrovich to Stanley, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
50. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Of those retired by Le Marchant, the Comptroller of Contracts, Mr Portelli, was perhaps the oldest being 74 years old with a service record stretching over 54 years.
54. Le Marchant to Newcastle, 21 Feb. 1863, C.O.158/200, PRO, Kew.
55. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185 and Le Marchant to Lytton, 12 Jan. 1859, C.O.158/187, PRO, Kew.
56. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
57. Ibid.
58. Earl Grey, op.cit., Vol.I, pp.298-9.
59. Malta Government Gazette, No.1984, 30 Dec. 1858 and Malta Government Gazette, No.1973, 8 Oct. 1858, C.O.162/16, PRO, Kew.
60. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
61. Lytton to Le Marchant, 8 Oct. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.



65. C. Price, op.cit., p.105.
66. Lytton to Le Marchant, 8 Oct. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
67. Address (No.1) from general public to Le Marchant, encls. in Le Marchant to Newcastle, 23 May 1860, C.O.158/190, PRO, Kew.
68. Ibid.
69. See Colonial Office mins. on Le Marchant to Newcastle as above.
70. Le Marchant to Newcastle, 12 Jun. 1861, C.O.158/194, PRO, Kew.
71. Ibid.
72. Le Marchant to Newcastle, 6 Apr. 1861, C.O.158/194, PRO, Kew.
73. Ibid.
74. Malta Government Gazette, No.200, 13 Aug. 1861, C.O.162/17, PRO, Kew.
75. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid.
80. See Chapter Seven.
81. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
82. Lytton to Le Marchant, 8 Oct. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
83. Ibid.
84. Le Marchant to Lytton, 15 Oct. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
85. Encls. 2, Reply of "four lawyers" to Le Marchant and other elected members, 15 Feb. 1864, C.O.158/205, and encls. 4, Malta Observer, Thursday, 3 Sept. 1863, C.O.158/205, PRO, Kew.
86. Encls. 2, as above.
87. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. Lytton to Le Marchant, 17 Dec. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
91. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
92. Le Marchant to Lytton, 12 Jan. 1859, C.O.158/187, PRO, Kew.
93. Le Marchant to Newcastle, 27 Aug. 1859, C.O.158/188, PRO, Kew.

94. See Proceedings of Meeting of 11 Jan. 1859, encls. in Le Marchant to Lytton, 12 Jan. 1858, C.O.158/187, PRO, Kew.
95. Lee, op.cit., p.136.
96. Le Marchant to Lytton, 24 Jul. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
97. These Committees had been created by More O'Ferrall but Reid too had continued with the practice. See Chapter Seven.
98. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew.
99. A. Bertram, (1930), The Colonial Service, Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge, p.176.
100. Le Marchant to Newcastle, 2 Feb. 1860, C.O.158/190, PRO, Kew.
101. A.V. Laferla, op.cit., p.156.
102. Blunt, op.cit., p.75.
103. Bertram, op.cit., p.18.
104. H.I. Lee, op.cit., p.136.
105. Ibid., p.139.
106. A.V.. Laferla, op.cit., Vol.I, p.241.
107. Petition in Le Marchant to Newcastle, 30 Jan. 1864, C.O.158/202, PRO, Kew.
108. Ibid.
109. Ibid.
110. Monsell min. on Grant to Granville, 16 Jul. 1869, C.O.158/219, PRO, Kew.
111. Cardwell to Le Marchant, 19 Sept. 1864, C.O.159/27, PRO, Kew.
112. The Suez Canal project also increased Malta's strategic usefulness. Indeed, what was said in the early 1800s that Malta was the stepping-stone to the route to British India was more appropriate in the 1870s.
113. Britain ceded the Ionian Islands to Greece in 1864.
114. H. Bowen-Jones, J.C. Dewdney, W.B. Fisher, (1961), Malta: Background for Development, Univ. of Durham, p.144.
115. C. Price, op.cit., p.108.
116. Storks to Cardwell, 21 Jan. 1865, C.O.158/206, PRO, Kew.
117. Storks to Cardwell, 6 Jun. 1865, C.O.158/206, PRO, Kew.
118. Ibid.
119. Ibid.

120. Ibid.
121. See Blue Book 1865.
122. Storks to Cardwell, 6 Jun. 1865, C.O.158/206, PRO, Kew.
123. Ibid.
124. Rodgers min. on Storks to Cardwell, 30 Mar. 1865, C.O.158/206, PRO, Kew.
125. Cardwell min., 13 Jun. 1865, on Storks to Cardwell, 6 Jun. 1865, C.O.158/206, PRO, Kew.
126. Dingli was a frequent target for attacks in the press and as we shall see in the following Chapter some of these attacks were both unwarranted and unjustified.
127. Elected Members to Buckingham, 28 Mar. 1867, in Storks to Buckingham, 29 Mar. 1867, C.O.158/211, PRO, Kew.
128. Ibid.
129. Ibid.
130. Malta Government Gazette, 2 Nov. 1858 in Le Marchant to Newcastle, 19 Apr. 1861, C.O.158/193, PRO, Kew.
131. Petition in Le Marchant to Newcastle, 30 Jan. 1864, C.O.158/202, PRO, Kew.
132. Circular Despatch, 30 Mar. 1861, in Circulars from Sec. of State, 1861-1864, No.4, Palace Archives, Valletta.
133. Malta Government Gazette, 20 Jan. 1865, C.O.162/18, PRO, Kew.
134. Ibid.
135. Ibid.
136. Malta Government Gazette, No.2217, 6 May 1865, C.O.162/18, PRO, Kew.
137. Malta Government Gazette, No.2245, 27 Oct. 1865, C.O.162/18, PRO, Kew.
138. Malta Government Gazette, No.2221, 26 May 1865, C.O.162/18, PRO, Kew.
139. Malta Government Gazette, No.2250, 8 Dec. 1865. C.O.162/18, PRO, Kew.
140. H.I. Lee, op.cit., p.142.
141. Storks to Buckingham, 13 Apr. 1867, C.O.158/211, PRO, Kew.
142. Ibid.
143. Ibid.
144. Elected Members to Buckingham, 28 Mar. 1867, in Storks to Buckingham, 29 Mar. 1867, C.O.158/211, PRO, Kew.

145. Storks to Buckingham, 13 Apr. 1867, C.O.158/211, PRO, Kew.
146. Following serious rioting in Jamaica, Storks was directed to proceed there to inquire into the causes and to substitute Governor Eyre. He stayed in Jamaica for a year. See A.V. Laferla, *op.cit.*, Vol.I, p.263.
147. Grant to Buckingham, 29 Feb. 1868, C.O.158/215, PRO, Kew.
148. Grant to Buckingham, 5 May 1868, C.O.158/215, PRO, Kew.
149. *Ibid.*
150. Buckingham to Grant, 1 Feb. 1868, C.O.158/215, PRO, Kew.
151. Grant to Buckingham, 5 May 1868, C.O.158/215, PRO, Kew; and H.I. Lee. *op.cit.*, p.142.
152. Petition of Elected Members in Grant to Granville, 11 Oct. 1869, C.O.158/220, PRO, Kew.
153. C. Price, *op.cit.*, p.155.
154. Hansard, (1774), Vol.CXCVII, 3rd Series.
155. Granville to Grant, 29 Nov. 1869, C.O.159/29, PRO, Kew.
156. Grant to Granville, 11 Oct. 1869, C.O.158/220, PRO, Kew.
157. Grant to Granville, 16 Jul. 1869, C.O.158/219, PRO, Kew.
158. See Blue Book for 1869.
159. These included the Harbour Works, the Opera House and the drought prevention projects.
160. Grant to Kimberley, 10 Jan. 1871, C.O.158/226, PRO, Kew.
161. Grant to Kimberley, 31 May 1871, C.O.158/227, PRO, Kew.
162. *Ibid.*
163. Grant to Granville, 16 Jul. 1869, C.O.158/219, PRO, Kew.
164. *Ibid.*
165. For an excellent study of nineteenth century social conditions see C. Price, *op.cit.*
166. Granville min. of 28 Jul. 1869 on Grant to Granville, 16 Jul. 1869, C.O.158/219, PRO, Kew.
167. Copies or Extracts of the Commissioners of Inquiry, (1838), Count Messina Bequest, National Library, Valletta, Pt.1, p.31.
168. Monsell min. on Grant to Granville, 16 Jul. 1869, C.O.158/219, PRO, Kew.
169. *Ibid.*
170. Grant to Granville, 30 Mar. 1870, C.O.158/222, PRO, Kew.

171. Ibid.
172. Granville to Grant, 1 May 1870, C.O.159/30, PRO, Kew.
173. H.I. Lee, op.cit., p.145.
174. A.V. Laferla, op.cit., p.273.
175. Grant to Buckingham, 8 Oct. 1867, C.O.158/212, PRO, Kew.
176. Ibid.
177. Storks to Cardwell, 30 Sept. 1865, C.O.158/207, PRO, Kew.
178. Grant to Kimberley, 22 Nov. 1870, C.O.158/224, and Grant to Kimberley, 16 Feb. 1872, C.O.158/230, PRO, Kew.
179. Grant to Granville, 1 Jan. 1869, C.O.158/218, PRO, Kew.
180. Granville min. of 12 Mar. 1869, on Grant to Granville, 26 Feb. 1869, C.O.158/218, PRO, Kew.
181. Monsell min. on Grant to Granville, 16 Jul. 1869, C.O.158/219, PRO, Kew.
182. Straubenzee to Kimberley, 23 May 1873, C.O.158/235, PRO, Kew.
183. Kimberley min. of 8 Jun. 1873, on above, C.O.158/235, PRO, Kew.
184. Straubenzee to Kimberley, 23 May 1873, C.O.158/235, PRO, Kew.
185. Ibid.
186. Ibid.
187. Kimberley min. on Straubenzee to Kimberley, 23 May 1873, C.O.158/235, PRO, Kew.
188. B. Porter, (1984), (2nd ed), *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism 1850-1983*, Longman, London, p.63.
189. R. Shannon, (1976), *The Crisis of Imperialism 1865-1915*, Paladin Books, London, p.40.
190. B. Porter, op.cit., p.82.
191. Ibid., p.82.
192. R.J. Gavin, (1975), *Aden Under British Rule, 1839-1967*, Hurst & Co, London, p.177.
193. Ibid., p.189.
194. H.I. Lee, op.cit., pp.164-5.
195. Ibid., p.165.
196. Ibid., p.146.

197. Ibid., p.146.
198. Carnarvon min. on Straubenzee to Carnarvon, 28 Aug. 1874, C.O.158/240, PRO, Kew.
199. Herbert min. on Straubenzee to Carnarvon, 7 Oct. 1874, C.O.158/240, PRO, Kew.
200. Straubenzee to Carnarvon, 28 Aug. 1874. C.O.158/240, PRO, Kew.
201. Ibid.
202. Ridley (OAG) to Carnarvon, 15 Oct. 1866, O.C.158/209, PRO, Kew.
203. Houlton to Fortescue, in Le Marchant to Cardwell, C.O.158/203, PRO, Kew.
204. British policy laid down that non-European peoples were not fit for representative government or for any share in decision-making. See, for example, B. Porter, op.cit., pp.17-25.
205. Carnarvon to Straubenzee, 22 May 1875, C.O.158/240, PRO, Kew.
206. Ibid.
207. Straubenzee to Carnarvon, 4 Jun. 1875, in Confidential Despatches to Sec. of State, Vol.11, Dec. 1874-Dec. 1878, Palace Archives, Valletta.
208. Ibid.
209. Straubenzee to Carnarvon, 29 Jan. 1876, Despatches to Sec. of State, Vol.13, 1874-1877, Palace Archives, Valletta.
210. Ibid.
211. Herbert min. on Straubenzee to Carnarvon, 29 Jan. 1876, C.O.158/244, PRO, Kew.
212. Carnarvon to Straubenzee, 31 Jan. 1876, C.O.158/244, PRO, Kew.
213. Ibid.
214. Lord Carnarvon, "Imperial Administration" in The Fortnightly Review (new series), No.CXLIV, Dec. 1878.

## CHAPTER NINE

### THE COMMISSIONS OF ROWSELL, JULYAN AND KEENAN

Although Britain had acquired Malta because of its strategic importance, until the 1870s, official efforts at anglicizing the Maltese had been remarkably few and far in between. Maltese enthusiasm at the turn of the century in favour of British annexation of their islands seemed, at the time, to make the pursuit of such a policy redundant. In 1813, Lord Bathurst the Secretary of State, had instructed Maitland to establish public schools 'where the reading and writing of English may be taught'. [1] But, as the Royal Commission of 1836-8 demonstrated, this instruction had been disregarded by Maitland and, over the years, by his successors. [2] One reason for this was fear for upsetting the Catholic Church which tended to regard ignorance of the English language as an effective obstacle to attempts by British evangelic groups to Protestanize the Maltese. [3] The process of anglicization was, however, further retarded by the Commissioners themselves when they concluded that Italian was 'far more useful to a Maltese than any other language, excepting his native tongue.' [4] They had recommended, therefore, that Italian should be the language of instruction while English was only to be studied if the time allotted to a pupil's schooling allowed for it. Things remained very much in this mould until the late 1850s when the introduction of a system of competitive examinations for clerkships made knowledge of English as well as Italian a condition for entry into the civil service of the Island. [5] From this time onwards knowledge of English among the population, but especially in the towns, began to show marked progress. Among the labouring classes too, English was becoming an important asset as it opened the prospects of employment in the dockyard and the armed services. Nonetheless, this progress had been achieved with little or no compulsion. There had been no formal policy of anglicization, even though some thought

that this might have boosted emigration to other British parts of the Empire.[6] But, until then, Britain had not as yet perceived a challenge for the hearts and minds of the Maltese from any of the other powers. By the 1860s, however, the fear had germinated in the minds of Governors and some colonial officials, that Maltese loyalty to Britain may not survive the test given the existing choice of other powerful masters. Anglicization and exclusive dependence of the population on Britain seemed then, to be the best policy.

As we saw in the previous Chapter it was Le Marchant who first raised the issue when he denounced the real lack of progress that the English language had made among the population and pointed to the alleged influences being exerted on Malta by events in North Africa and in Italy.[7] These sentiments were re-echoed by Patrick Grant, in 1869, when he vainly sought, 'in the interests, both of the local and Imperial government', Colonial Office permission to save a private shool which conducted its lessons entirely in English.[8] Two years earlier Grant had sought to impress upon London, in the wake of the decision of the P & O Steamship Company to cancel its once weekly stopover in Malta of its Indian Mail Packet, the necessity of completely binding Maltese economic interests with those of Britain.[9] Grant wrote to Buckingham, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, that, although the cancelation of Malta as a port of call would mean a loss to the trade of the island it was 'from a political view', that the matter had to be viewed. He explained that

'the Maltese at their present moment look to Great Britain alone as the source of their wealth and their trade supply...[and] they are only too well satisfied, should all the source of their wealth continue to emanate from the Mother Country'.[10]

But, he warned, 'when the interests of a people are not maintained a certain indifference must take its place.' He was certain that the French or Italians, 'at any rate foreigners', would rush to fill the void created by the British Company, for motives not necessarily connected with commerce. Grant concluded, rather emphatically, that the



'sympathies of the people of Malta towards England should be, on grounds of good policy, specially fostered and maintained, and that they [Maltese] should be practically taught to look to Great Britain for all their benefits...'

Admiral Yelverton concurred with the Governor. He wrote, that

'it would be much to be regretted if for any small convenience or saving of time we sacrifice the advantage of maintaining a feeling of cheerful dependence on England at this important station.'[11]

These pleas, however, fell on deaf ears in London. One colonial official even minuted that

'the saving of an entire day in our communication with India must outweigh any wish to favour the inhabitants of even our principal station in the Mediterranean.'[12]

In 1873 it was Straubenzee's turn to raise the matter when he learned of War Office plans to abolish the Royal Malta Fencible Corps. He immediately wrote to the Secretary of State opposing the measure. 'The Corps' he wrote,

'forms under present circumstances the special link between the English and Maltese: if this line is broken or if its force is diminished, the result will be the strengthening of the line of demarcation between the two peoples and that community of interests, which it is so much the policy and so much the desire of HM's Government to maintain in its integrity, will be materially weakened...'

He reminded the Secretary of State that

'the language of the Council, the language of the Courts of Justice, nay even the first language which the Maltese youth is taught in the schools is Italian. In all this, there is a tendency to italianize whilst, on the other hand, the social effect of this local corps tends to anglicize...'[13]

Lord Carnarvon, who took over the seals of the Colonial Office in 1874, fully agreed with the Governor and the Corps was spared. He also agreed with the Governor's decision, in 1877, to raise, over those for Italian, the maximum number of marks allowed for English at future competitive examinations for vacancies in the public service.[14] The Governor also laid down that, in future, all letters addressed to Her Majesty or to the Secretary of State, if not written in English were, except in cases of poverty, to be accompanied by an English translation.[15] Hence, it was at this point that a conscious decision to

anglicise the Maltese was taken. This is also clearly evident from the instructions to Julyan and to Keenan who, as part of their brief, were to investigate and advise on how to advance, at the expense of Italian, the use of the English language in the administration, the law courts and education. But, it represented too a conscious decision, on the part of the Colonial Office, to tighten its grip on Maltese affairs generally. This gave rise first to the Rowsell Commission and later to the Julyan and Keenan mission. This Chapter departs from a brief examination of Rowsell's Report on the Taxation and Expenditure of Malta in which he makes several observations on Maltese public service. Then follows a detailed discussion of Julyan's Report on the civil establishments of Malta. Finally, the salient points of Keenan's Report on the educational establishments of Malta are briefly noted.

#### THE ROWSELL MISSION

At the time of his appointment as Commissioner, in 1877, Francis W. Rowsell was Director of Navy Contracts. He was about to visit Malta for health reasons but nevertheless accepted Lord Carnarvon's invitation to carry out, while in the island, a thorough examination of the system of food taxation to be found there. In his letter of appointment it was pointed out to him, that

'a considerable part of the revenue of the Colony is derived from Import Duties upon grain, and questions as to the incidence of these taxes, and the possibility of replacing them by others'[16]

had engaged the attention of both the Secretary of State and of some members of the House of Commons. They were, therefore, anxious to have this matter investigated by an independent person.[17] Rowsell was also at liberty, if he thought it justified, to inquiry into 'taxes other than those on grain or into the expenditure of the Colony, whether as regards the cost of establishments or other services.'[18] As it turned out, because of the close connection that was said to exist between the level of taxation and the cost of public establishments, a good part of the final

report presented by Rowsell deals exclusively with these establishments.

In conducting his inquiry the Commissioner sought the views of as wide a spectrum of Maltese society as possible, including those of Members and ex-Members of Council, landed proprietors, merchants and bankers, the nobility and the clergy, and even that of

‘small tenant farmers, labourers employed by them...large proprietors, workmen in handicrafts, boatmen, and others of the manual labour class.’[19]

What he got back contained, in his view, ‘little else than an expression of opinion, which had direct relationship to the supposed class interest of the writers.’[20] This he found understandable. In a small community like that of Malta, he wrote,

‘where wealth is concentrated in very few hands, and where the struggle among the generality for the existence of their class, and for individual existence within that class, is very keen,

it was very difficult for people to rise above ‘personal considerations and to look at measures in their bearing upon the common welfare.’[21] He felt, therefore, that the views expressed were

‘entitled to attention only as representing the individual wish of persons or classes, and the way in which those persons would vote if the question of abolition or reduction of the corn duties were left to the arbitrament of a poll.’[22]

Few Maltese displayed a desire to break with the old system by which one-third of government revenue was derived from the duty on corn on bread tax. The majority, which included six of the elected members, the Chamber of Commerce, the farmers themselves, the nobility and the Church, were against any change. The six elected members defended the existing system - of which only one of their colleagues had complained - pointing to the fact that the revenue of the government had proved sufficient to pay for the daily needs of the administration and for a series of extraordinary works involving hundreds of thousands of pounds.[23] Indeed, Rowsell himself admitted that between 1858 and 1876 ‘no less a sum than £173,939 has been spent out of revenue in the execution of works...’[24] Each group demanded, however, ‘economy in the whole administration’,[25] without, at the same

time, indicated how this could be achieved. This seemed to justify, in Rowsell's view, the need for a general examination of the revenue and expenditure, and of the civil establishments of government.

Rowsell found, in 1876, that the revenue amounted to £176,002 of which £106,226 were derived exclusively from customs duties.[26] Of the latter, £53,253 were raised from the duty on grain imports. Government expenditure, for that same year, was calculated at £167,507, with £75,069 being the cost of salaries of employees of the public service, and £68,257 of the services - pensions, poor relief, education, hospitals, police, street lighting, repairs and so on - provided by the government,[27] a total of £143,000.[28] On the basis of these figures there appeared, in Rowsell's view, therefore, a "prima face" connection between the bread tax, or grain duty, and government expenditure.

'The general impression' produced upon Rowsell 'by a perusal of the documents furnished, by study of some test offices, and by personal conference with the heads of departments' was, that

'the service of administration is too costly, and that there are more people employed than are necessary to do the work as it is, and that the organisation of work itself might be simplified with great advantage.'[29]

This, of course, was hardly news to colonial officials. Commissioners, Secretaries of State, Under-Secretaries and Governors had all pointed it out at some time or another. Straubenzee, the Governor in office at the time of Rowsell's inquiry, had raised it only two years earlier.[30] But some of Rowsell's other findings, did furnish some sort of explanation for this state of affairs. One finds from reading the report, for example, that in Malta there were 'no copying presses in any of the offices, and all, even the most trivial things, are copied by hand.'[31] Neither was 'there any division of the clerks into classes', nor a 'general scale of pay' or 'any arrangement for increment, except on promotion, or after 30 years of service'. Further, 'almost all employes, officers, clerks, and messengers, even servants and workmen' being on the establishment had a claim to

pension. Only in the Customs Department did he find a few people employed on day pay, but even here pressure was being applied, notably by elected individual members of Council, to have these placed on the pensionable establishment. He deprecated such a system, as well as the opposition of most Heads of Departments to the idea of creating within the Maltese civil service a class of clerks, equivalent to that of Civil Service writers in England, on day pay. Rowsell wrote that,

‘Viewed from the side of the employer and paymaster, this exclusive use of "established" clerks and employes cannot be justified, and supposing the organization to remain as at present’,

i.e. of 262 officers and 101 clerks, he expected that ‘there should be an infusion, as vacancies occur, of at least 15 per cent of writers on day pay, without claim to pension.’ He accepted, however, that these writers ought to ‘be eligible for the establishment and constitute its main recruiting ground.’[32]

He was also of the view that

‘the diversity of salary between clerks doing the same kind of work in different offices, to which chance rather than selection has appropriated them...[was] injurious to the service and to those employed in it.’

He proposed, instead, the division of the clerks, other than Chief Clerks and writers, into two groups and a scheme of annual increments of £2 in the lower and £3 in the higher division till the attainment of a maximum, to be decided, was reached. He believed that the introduction of a system for regulating salaries would put an end to the practice, by elected members of Council, of putting pressure on the government for procuring increases of pay to individual officers, clerks and other employees. He hoped too that it would serve to inculcate, among members of the service, a sense of loyalty ‘to the interests of the community at large.’ This he also held to be advantaged by a general, rather than a departmental system of promotion. In theory, promotions in Malta were granted ‘according to seniority coupled with efficiency’[33] and that on promotion, public servants were liable to be transferred to other departments. In practice, promotions occurred at

both the general and the departmental level. Among the lower office clerks promotion was by department, while at the higher level, i.e. from Chief Clerk upwards, promotion involved the possibility of transfer from one department to another.[34]

Following from his general remarks about the Maltese Civil Service, Rowsell turned his attention to the question of retrenchment. Within twenty years, as he discovered for himself, the cost of establishments had risen by an average of £1,000 a year, from £54,740 in 1855 to over £75,000 in 1876, while the number of public servants had risen by only 186 to 1,157. A great part of this increase in cost was due mainly to periodic increases in salary. In 1876 alone, in order to diminish some of the graver inequalities which existed, the government had forked out a little above £2,000 in salary increases.[35] In the same year another £3,000 were added to the cost of establishments with the recruitment of 98 new members to the police force. These and other increases had taken place despite exhortations for economy from Secretaries of State and promises of reductions from Governors, although some of them had been justified by periods of high prices.[36] Rowsell himself, notwithstanding his view that the public service was overmanned, could not indicate savings beyond £3,000 and these spread over several departments. These he hoped to achieve by the abolition of the Land Revenue Department, of the Treasury and of the Printing Office, by a reduction of offices in the Judicial Establishments, and by a more efficient administration of the Charitable and Educational Institutions.

The Department of Land Revenue had been, since the time of the Order of St John, but under a different name,[37] responsible for the administration of Crown Property in Malta, said to be equal to about one-third of all land in Malta and Gozo. Rowsell saw in this ownership, however, no special advantage for the government, for although at the time only 'one government owned house, and only one piece of rocky ground'[38] were without tenants, most of the revenue of the government from its

property was respent in salaries and repairs. Hence, Rowsell strongly favoured the sale or perpetual lease of all government property and the investment of the proceeds in British consols. This, he suggested, would lead to the 'ultimate extinction' of this department.[39] The office of Public Works which had been severed from and reamalgamated with the Department of Land Revenue on several occasions in the past, he preferred to place

'under the management of some professional officer, like a Captain of Engineers, who must obviously be more competent to discharge...[its duties] than a layman, however, honourable and zealous like the present Collector of land revenue.'[40]

Rowsell's private opinion of the personal qualities of the latter contrasted sharply with that expressed in his Report. Dr Trapani, the Collector of Land Revenue, Rowsell wrote, was 'too fixed and immobile, and too much lacking in energy to make a good head of department where action is required,' proof being 'the arrears of rent, extending over many years, which he allowed to grow to inconvenient'[41] amounts.

This implied some criticism of the way appointments to higher offices in Malta were made and Colonial officials were, therefore, quick to reply that, when Trapani was promoted, it was usual to let Governors have 'their own way' and that his 'recommendation was accepted without question.'[42] This confirms, what has been said earlier, that indigenization had transferred real control over appointments from the Colonial Office to the colonial administration. It also indicates that London was no longer prepared to rubber stamp recommendations coming from the Governor in Malta. However, in recommending the extinction of the Department of Land Revenue, Rowsell missed an important point, i.e. that Malta, being a strategic military base, property was constantly required for building new barracks, defence lines and other military and naval facilities. For this reason, in the late 1860s the local government gave itself powers to expropriate property merely on the basis of a declaration by the Governor.[43] Thus, Crown property, in addition to any revenue it might have generated if

properly administered, had a strategic significance. Nevertheless, Rowsell concluded that if his recommendations were implemented 'considerable economies would...show themselves in the expenditure of the department.'[44]

With respect to the Treasury Office and the Government Printing Press, Rowsell stated that the reasons which had prompted the Commissioners of 1836 to recommend their abolition as distinct offices still held force.[45] On the one hand he suggested that the duties of the former should be merged with those of clerks acting under the Chief Secretary. On the other hand, he felt that the existence, in Malta, of several private printing presses, had rendered the operation of a government owned press unwarranted. He wrote, that

'a good deal of unnecessary work is done now and much of what is necessary, [e.g. Blue Book] is done upon a scale which is quite beyond requirement.'[46]

He believed that the local government would save about £500 a year on printing alone if the printing office was suppressed.

Notwithstanding his own admission of a lack of knowledge of Maltese legal departments, Rowsell was 'under a strong impression that in these also a better organisation would lead to a saving of money'.[47] In the preceding year these establishments had cost the government over £13,000 but the Commissioner was convinced that savings of about £1,000 annually could be achieved if the number of Court registrars was reduced, the registry system centralised, and if the number of judges and magistrates was in each case reduced by one.[48]

For Rowsell, a cobdenite, the local government's expenditure on the charities and on education was an important issue.[49] He reported that, in 1876, the Charitable Institutions had cost the colony nearly £27,000. He himself disagreed with many of the heads of expenditure under this item, but was 'not prepared to go into a detailed criticism'[50] of it, mainly perhaps, to avoid being involved in some controversy which would have



sidetracked discussion away from his main recommendations. Nevertheless, he stressed the fact that, although the government spent £80 a day for charitable purposes, there was in Malta

‘no poor-house, in the sense of a workhouse, nor any general organisation for the relief of the poor and the suppression of mendicity’.[51]

It was clear that, nearly eighty years of British rule had not proved sufficient to establish in Malta British concepts of charity.[52] Nor, Rowsell conceded, did it seem likely to happen in the future. The best one could hope for, he wrote, was

‘a vigorous head and hand which will so organise the establishments as to enable the government faithfully to discharge the trust it may be said to have inherited from the Knights Hospitallers, at the same time that the money and property appropriated to this purpose are made to go as far as possible.’[53]

Rowsell believed that the most qualified public officer for the job was Ferdinand Inglott, since 1870 Head of Customs. He would have preferred, had there been a choice and ‘if important changes’ were to ‘take place in the Department and Administration of charities’, a younger man than Inglott but the latter was, in his opinion, ‘active, clear-headed...facile’, had experience of the charities and was ‘undoubtedly the best administrative officer...in Malta.’[54]

The Commissioner’s final recommendation was directed at the island’s system of education. The fees for the Lyceum and the University, he said, were too low and ought to be raised to higher and more realistic levels. His preference was for the abolition of ‘the expensive medium of an university’ and the creation of an examining board which would be authorised to grant degrees in the several faculties to those who, after private study, reached an approved standard after examinations.[55] Rowsell offered no criticism or suggestion for improving the actual system of education, but he wrote of ‘the strongest representations’ made to him ‘by men of the most opposite general opinions’,[56] to the effect that the most thorough investigation was needed. He himself endorsed this call, for ‘the subject is one of great importance to the island, and the money expended

yearly upon it is considerable.'[57] We shall see further below that Rowsell's proposal did not go unheeded and that the subsequent inquiry was to prove to be the catalyst which precipitated the language question.

It must not be forgotten, however, that the primary purpose behind Rowsell's Commission was to investigate Malta's tax system and the possibility of replacing the grain tax with other forms of taxation. The duty paid on wheat imported into Malta was ten shillings a quarter and six and four shillings a quarter respectively on Indian corn and barley,[58] making up nearly one-third of the government revenue. Rowsell found that, given the fact that the main consumers of this item were the labouring poor and the unemployed, members of this class tended to pay 5s more per head per annum in taxes than individual members of the upper and middle classes. And since the former was by far the most numerous class it resulted that it was their taxes which mainly sustained the administration and its programmes. Rowsell concluded that, on this evidence alone, the Colonial Office should totally abolish this tax and replace it with others, which the Commissioner himself enumerated, on items consumed mainly by the middle classes.

By the time the Colonial Office had arrived at a decision on how to proceed in the light of Rowsell's Report, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach had replaced Lord Carnarvon as Secretary of State for the Colonies. In London there had been some irritation with regard to the reluctance of the government in Malta to adopt some of the proposals for retrenchment to be found in the report. 'The favourite motto of the Malta Government', wrote one official, 'seems to be "quieta non movere"'. [59] Hicks-Beach for his part considered retrenchment as part of a long-term strategy. What he looked for in Rowsell's Report were recommendations which could be implemented right away and as he found none which fitted this description he felt compelled to dismiss 'them for the moment from consideration'. [60] His immediate focus was the question of taxation. He accepted that the

wheat tax was of such importance to the revenue of the local government and the circumstances of Malta so peculiar, that it was 'impossible to accede to the demand'[61] for its total abolition. Even so, he considered that the grain tax was 'open in principle to some very grave objections'.[62] and he proposed to reduce it by one-half. The loss in revenue he intended to recoup by new taxes on beer, wine and spirits, tonnage dues, store rent on bonded goods, licences and education fees.

The reaction in Valletta against these proposals was indicative of how any attempt to tamper with existing structures and taxes immediately brought to the surface tensions, divisions and vested interests. In Valletta, a crowd of about 2,000 people gathered to demonstrate and 'protest against an act' which was said to decide their destiny. Carrying placards vilifying Rowsell, they smashed the window panes of his residence and later entered the Council Chamber and disrupted proceedings.[63] Savona, the elected member of Council whose successful lobbying of House of Commons members had instigated the inquiry, received from the crowd similar treatment. In the next couple of years every attempt to push the tax reform through Council was blocked by the elected members.[64] Colonial officials contemplated using the official majority but Hicks-Beach rejected the idea arguing that taxation was clearly a local matter. Herbert, the Permanent Under-Secretary agreed remarking, however, that 'Cardwell's declaration of the rights of the unofficial members' had produced of much trouble and that in a fortress colony

'principally inhabited by foreigners who were Roman Catholics a "severe type" of Crown Colony should have been preserved.'[65]

The affair also served, however, to expose the existing divisions in the public service and to emphasise the ambivalent situation in which the Constitution of 1849 had placed senior civil servants and Heads of Departments. As it happened one group of civil servants led by Victor Houlton, the Chief Secretary, opposed the abolition or reduction of the grain tax. A second group, led by Adrian Dingli, the Crown Advocate,

supported its reform. Dingli had proposed, in letters to Rowsell, a reduction of one half in the bread tax and the introduction of some direct taxes which he saw as necessary 'for the political education of the people, and their preparation for self-government.' [66] The Chief Secretary, however, supported the status quo and even published, anonymously, a pamphlet on taxation in Malta to support his stand. [67] Houlton, however, went further and despite precise instructions from London he not only 'failed', in Council, 'to carry into effect the intentions of Her Majesty's Government' but placed 'on record...a resolution entirely opposed to their strong opinions'. [68] This blatant sabotage from one of its servants, led London to postpone its taxation reforms in Malta.

Generally speaking, Dingli was not considered as a great supporter of reform but in defending the status quo he would never have gone so far as to humiliate the Colonial Office in public. [69] Indeed, we shall see in the following Chapter that, notwithstanding his opposition to a policy of forced anglicisation, Dingli did not make his views publicly known but supported, as was his duty, the policy of the government. Many, however, failed to appreciate this and almost every unpopular act or measure was ascribed to his influence. This was demonstrated quite forcefully by the controversy over the bread tax. On this question Dingli's private views coincided with those of London, nonetheless, he was made the target of attacks in Malta and London, even by those who like him supported the reform. One newspaper, (Public Opinion), edited by Savona, actually accused him of working for the retention of the bread tax as it enabled the government

'to lord it over the country, and to effect, with a high hand, out of the proceeds of the Bread Tax, all their pretty schemes for the embellishment of Valletta' [70]

to the detriment of the people in the districts. In April 1879 the attack was taken up by Plimsoll who claimed, in the Commons, that Dingli was 'the strongest opponent in Malta of its [bread tax] abolition.' [71] Soon after,

Savona, in a letter to the Secretary of State, 'virtually impugned' Dingli's 'sincerity in supporting a motion for the reduction of that duty.' [72]

Dingli protested against these attacks and pressed for permission to publish his private correspondence with Rowsell. But the Colonial Office rejected his plea, claiming that it could not, under any circumstance, allow civil servants to air or divulge in public either their private views or their advice to Governors. [73] Following Plimsoll's attack Dingli appealed for 'a higher authority to make a statement clearly stating his position,' [74] but this appeal was also rejected. The consequence of this was that, while in everything Dingli was expected to act very much like a minister of the Crown proposing and defending the policies of his government, in the face of criticism and personal attacks, he was to maintain the anonymity reserved for public servants.

#### THE JULYAN MISSION

Rowsell's observations on the public service had left Colonial officials in doubt, after reading Rowsell's observations, that the time as to the need for a comprehensive inquiry into 'the organisation and working of the Civil Establishments' [75] of Malta. On the suggestion of Robert Meade it was decided to entrust the inquiry in the hands of Penrose Julian who, some months earlier, had successfully carried out a similar mission in Mauritius. [76] According to his instructions Julian's mission was to have a fourfold objective. First, to examine every department of government

'with a view to ascertaining whether it may be practicable...to effect any reduction in the numbers and cost of the employes in the public service'. [77]

Second, to report on the possibility of promoting 'English as the official language of the colony.' Third, to investigate Maltese demands

'that the salary of the Governor of Malta from local sources should be reduced from £5,000 to £3,000, the balance, if necessary being made up from Imperial funds.'

Finally, Julian was instructed to examine the subject of the drawback of

customs' duties allowed to the 'Imperial Government on account of corn and cattle consumed by the Garrison and Fleet'.[78]

It was nearly forty years since a thorough investigation of the civil establishments had been conducted[79] and on this basis alone Julyan's official report was eagerly awaited at the Colonial Office. It was, in fact, to provide the basis for public service reform and political debate for the best part of the 1880s. It could not be otherwise for, in Malta, as with other Crown Colonies, the bureaucracy was synonymous with the government while its membership constituted, as already observed, a substantial proportion of the electorate. Furthermore, some of the items for investigation indicated in the letter conveying Sir Hicks-Beach instructions to Julyan, had been placed there in response to pressures of a political character emanating from Malta, notably pressures for the re-institution of civil government and for economy in the conduct of government.

Julyan opened his report by a warning that, 'with reference to the principal object'[80] of his mission, there appeared to be

'room for only a limited reduction in the number of Government employes...and none in the salaries of the subordinate classes.'

Indeed he was of the view that if his recommendations were adopted

'all, or nearly all, the saving thus effected in the number of employes may be judiciously applied in augmenting the stipends of those who remain.'

He also promised to address himself to the role, competence and status of many of the professionals, both legal and medical, employed in the public service and to the

'propriety of furnishing so small a dependency with such elaborate arrangements as exist for the administration of justice and the distribution of medical and other charities.'

It appeared to him that

'the increased prosperity of the Colony depended quite as much upon improvements in those respects as upon any changes that can be made in the condition of the Civil Service proper.'

Having thus stated his overall view even at this early stage of the report,

Julyan then proceeded to discuss in detail the organisation and workings of the Maltese public service and to suggest reforms.

The first question which Julyan tackled was that concerning the Governor's salary. He observed that the only justification which Britain had for maintaining in Malta a system of military government was rooted in the fact that the Island was considered to be a military and naval station of great importance. Therefore, as it was likely that military affairs were to continue to have precedence over civil matters and that a military officer was to continue to act as Governor, then it was only just that Britain should contribute from imperial funds £2000, (or two-fifths) towards the latter's salary.[81] The Commissioner also noted that it had been strongly urged upon him by many 'influential inhabitants',[82] that 'the future prosperity of Malta would be greatly promoted by the substitution of a civil for a military Governor'. The reasons were three. First, the civil affairs of the island required the undivided attention of a competent administrator. Second, that a military career did not afford the kind of training calculated to produce such an administrator. Third, that it was not possible for a military officer of high rank and advanced age, to perform efficiently the combined duties of Commander of the Forces, 'in so large a garrison as Malta' and of civil administrator. Consequently, it was alleged that civil affairs had been allowed

'to fall under the influence and direction of an irresponsible subordinate [meaning Dingli] who has thus become practically the civil ruler of the island.'

The Maltese proposed, therefore, as a remedy the appointment of a civil Governor or of a Lieutenant-Governor, the latter with responsibility for all civil matters but, subject to the veto of a military Governor, 'who on ordinary occasions should devote himself almost exclusively to his duties as Commander of Her Majesty's Forces'.

Julyan rejected the Maltese view. He held 'the real question'[83] to be one of individual qualification rather than of profession. He was

certain that 'with such aid as every Governor...has a right to expect from his subordinates' the remainder of the time not taken up by military duties would prove amply sufficient for a military governor to deal 'with the civil administration of this small island.' Furthermore, Julyan considered the appointment of a Lieutenant-Governor, with extensive powers over civil affairs, 'a dangerous innovation, involving considerable unnecessary expense, and not likely to result in anything but confusion.' [84] Such an officer, he wrote, would

'either become the de facto Governor, or be merely a Chief Secretary under another title. If he were the former, the nominal Governor would be an expensive superfluity; if he were the latter, there would practically be two chief Secretaries where only one is required'.

The solution suggested by Julyan was twofold. First, that in the case of Malta,

'past experience in civil administration, no less than in military duties, be made a "sine qua non" in the appointment of Governors'.

He thought this would be a decided advantage to the population. Second, that an Executive Council should be formed to assist and advise the Governor on all matters connected with the civil administration of the island. He believed that such a Council would strengthen the Governor's position in the eyes of the public, increase public confidence in the acts of the government and lay to rest the accusation that the governor depends upon an 'irresponsible and recognised individual for information and guidance'. It would also make it 'next to impossible' for government business to be controlled by one influential individual.

The question as to whether a Lieutenant-Governor should be appointed, served to bring into sharper focus the office of Chief Secretary. Independently of whether the government was civil or military, as Julyan correctly pointed out, the role of Chief Secretary was of great importance. The Governor's residence in a colony being short, the latter could not expect to govern efficiently without the assistance of some one with a more intimate knowledge of the inhabitants, of the exigencies of the colony and



of the working of government departments. Julyan admitted that, in the case of Malta, the fact of military government tended to accentuate this importance, with the Chief Secretary more or less expected to act, with respect to civil affairs, as the Governor's responsible agent. Thus, he was called

'upon not only to furnish the Governor with a correct view of the actual circumstances of the island, but also to interpret to him all the wishes and complaints of more or less truly representative sections of the community.'[85]

These were indeed demanding tasks and in order that they may be performed more efficiently, Julyan recommended that some of his duties should be hived-off to other departments. He felt too, that the creation of an Executive Council would also serve, as in the case of the Governor, to lighten the responsibilities of the Chief Secretary, even though he fully expected that both officers would be included in its membership.[86] The Commissioner envisaged, therefore, that these changes would eventually allow for the reduction of at least one senior clerk from the Chief Secretary's department and the reduction, on the appointment of a successor, of the Chief Secretary's salary from £1,300 to £1,000 per annum.[87]

Having disposed of these questions Julyan turned his attention to the revenue departments, viz., the Treasury, the Land Revenue and Public Works Department, the Customs Department, and the Port Department. In each of these departments Julyan found that the clerical duties were 'efficiently performed',[88] but with respect to the Land Revenue Department he observed that its past management had been completely faulty and its existing condition wholly unsatisfactory. This state of affairs, he said, had

'given rise to an exaggerated impression on the public mind that they are the result of favouritism and culpable neglect, if not of corruption.'

The real reason for 'this unfortunate state of things', according to Julyan, was that 'the duties and responsibilities imposed on the Head of the Department' were more than a person of ordinary intelligence and

capacity might be expected to perform properly. In fact, the Head of this department was responsible for the collection of all land revenue and for the superintendence of all public works. But the latter duties - for which he was not professionally qualified - pressed so heavily upon him that the business of both branches tended to suffer. Neither had he the time to exercise proper supervision over his subordinates and professional officers appeared 'in practice to be independent of all control.' [89] Julyan's conclusion was that Mr Trapani, the Collector of Land Revenue, was entrusted with a 'greater power than he can safely exercise' and that there was 'little more than a theoretical control over his actions.' The result was that, in 1877, the overall expenditure of this department, about £48,000 (of which £4,000 were stipends), had exceeded its earnings by over £5,000. [90]

Nonetheless, Julyan dismissed as no solution Rowsell's suggestion that the government should sell-off or lease, on a perpetual basis, its property. This, he held, was not in its best interests, especially from a political stand-point. He emphatically stressed that,

'as the great landlord of the Colony the Government secures an influence which is not without its advantage...and which may be far more important in the future.' [91]

What was required instead, was the existing rules should be strictly adhered to and that ultimate responsibility for expenditure and for all contracts should be placed beyond the control of departmental officials. To achieve this, the Commissioner wrote, it was necessary that the 'duties connected with the Land Revenue and Public Works should be entirely reconstructed' and that several of these duties 'should be distributed among separate branches of the public service.' [92] He recommended, therefore, the separation of the Revenue branch from the Works branch and the transfer from both these branches to a Contracts Committee, to be created, of all administrative responsibility for the sale or letting of property, for the procurement of supplies, and for public works.

This Committee was to consist of the Auditor-General, who was to be ex-officio Director of Contracts, and two other Heads of Department, preferably the Collector of Customs, and the Collector of Land Revenue, the latter to be styled in future the Receiver-General. However, whenever the items before the Committee involved matters concerning either the Charitable Institutions, or the ports, or public works, one of the other two heads was to make room for the head of one of the latter departments. Henceforth, instead of each department entering into its own contracts, under the system proposed by Julyan all contracts were to be effected by the new committee. Julyan expected that, as a result, the number of contracts would be fewer, that the amount of clerical labour involved would be lessened, that better and more uniform quality would be ensured, and that a better class of contractor would be attracted. He also hoped too that these new arrangements would also serve to place, beyond the power of any one person, the ability to influence any sale, lease, or contract of any kind. Such a system, he pointed out, had been successfully adopted in other colonies and he could see no reason why it should not work in Malta.

The Land Revenue branch Julyan proposed to convert into a purely financial department under the direction, not of a Collector, although the collection of all property rents was to remain his principal responsibility, but of a Receiver-General, whose duties were also to include the issuing of all licences for which a fee was charged and of all the financial business once transacted by the Treasury which was to cease to exist. Julyan estimated that with the abolition of the Treasury department 'an ultimate saving of from £700 to £900 per annum'[93] would accrue. The Commissioner also stressed the need for all rents on government-owned property to be raised to those charged by Church bodies and private landlords. This, he contended, was 'a perfectly legitimate proceeding',[94] especially in an island where the government already did too much for the people. Julyan admitted that while, within certain limits,

'it may be the duty of the Government...to act the part of a generous landlord',

it was equally its duty

'in the interest of the community at large, and as the steward of the public estate, to turn that estate to the best possible account by insuring the full market price.'[95]

The Works branch too, Julyan wished to see established as a separate and independent department for its functions, when compared to those of similar departments in other colonies, he considered as disproportionately large and important. 'Not only', wrote Julyan,

'has the Government to perform many duties which elsewhere generally fall on municipal authorities, but there are also assigned to it various tasks and responsibilities, which, in other portions of the British Empire, it is found expedient to leave in private hands, or under the care of independent corporations.'[96]

Examples of these included the Opera House, the Valletta Market, the public cemetery, and responsibility for the Cathedral of St John and several other churches and chapels which the government had inherited from the Order of St John. The new Public Works Department, as proposed by the Commissioner, was to retain many of its existing responsibilities, notably those concerned with the maintenance of government property, public roads, aqueducts and gardens, but its permanent staff was to be confined within the narrowest possible limits. Hence, all new works and repairs of any magnitude were to be executed by contract and, in future, labourers and other inferior employees were to

'cease to have a claim on the Government for life-long employment and superannuation'.

Something also had to be done, advised Julyan, about the conduct of professional officers - architects and surveyors - employed with this department who frequently absented themselves from their duties without making any 'precise statement of the grounds of their absence.'[97] He recommended that the

'system of allowing them to engage in private practice while they are permanent officials having a right to superannuation, should...be discontinued'

as quickly as possible. Professional officers, he wrote, were either to be 'salaried officers proper',[98] or like other professional men in private life, be paid solely by fees for the work performed by them. Finally, he concurred with Rowsell that the Head of this department ought to be a professional man, but a native of Malta, for Julyan felt that 'languages of the Island', i.e., Maltese and Italian, would pose serious difficulties for an outsider. Julyan recommended, however, that the appointee should be precluded from practicing privately and required to devote his whole time to the business of his office.

In contrast to the Land Revenue Department, Julyan found the Customs Department, whose head was Ferdinand Inglott, in a 'highly efficient and admirable condition'.[99] The manner in which it is administered, he wrote, 'the systematic organisation of all its various branches, and the energy and intelligence applied to the working-out of all its details',[100] were highly creditable. It was not isolated praise. In 1876, the local Chamber of Commerce had, at its annual meeting, proffered 'a word of praise'[101] to the Collector for many of the improvements he had introduced, while three years later Julyan reported that the leading merchants of Malta had stated to him that Inglott

'had raised the Customs Department from a sad state of chaos and reproach...to the...condition in which I found it; and that although he was generally considered unnecessarily severe in exacting conformity to the regulations, yet his impartiality, zeal and uprightness commanded the respect of the whole commercial body.'[102]

Inglott, the Commissioner told the Secretary of State, was 'immeasurably superior to all other' heads of departments and was

'possessed of such qualifications as could hardly have failed to ensure distinction in any colony.'[103]

Furthermore, Julyan attributed everything that was good in the administration of the Charitable Institutions to the time when Inglott was its head. Ironically, at that time, the elected members of Council had steadfastly opposed the Governor's proposal to grant Inglott an increase of

salary and the latter, when the opportunity arose, exchanged the Headship of the Charitable Institutions for that of Collector of Customs.[104] It was, to some extent, fortunate that this had happened for the Customs Department was the most important revenue department of the Island. Indeed, about two-thirds of the entire revenue of Malta, and three times as much as was derived from any other source, were collected by this department. But, if Julyan found little to criticise in this department, he was opposed to some of the commercial practices of Malta which added to the work of the Customs. He deprecated, for example, the practice by importers of selling grain in small quantities, imposing upon the purchaser the obligations of passing Customs entry for his portion. This, wrote Julyan, not only led to the loss of valuable time but in effect turned the Customs establishment 'into a sort of retail shop, with disadvantage to everyone but the importer.'[105]

With the elimination of such practices, the Commissioner felt that, even here, some savings could be achieved.

The last of the so-called revenue departments was the Port Department. In truth, as Julyan demonstrated, this department contributed little to the revenue of the government. No charge was made to outgoing shipping for the issue of bills of health or for the supply of water; no licensing fees were paid by harbour pilots, pontoon and steam-tug operators, and by boatmen who earned their living conveying passengers about the harbours. What Julyan perhaps failed to grasp was that the use of Valletta as a commercial harbour, which had been greatly enhanced with the opening of the Suez Canal, (see Figure 9:1) was of such vital importance to the Maltese economy that the government was prepared to forego revenue in order to remain competitive, especially at a time when the trade could have easily gone elsewhere.[106] Hundreds of families depended for their livelihood on employment connected with the harbour and a loss in trade would have had serious social and political consequences. Thus, it was with great reluctance that in 1877 the local government had agreed with Rowsell's

# SHIPPING TONNAGE ENTERING THE GRAND HARBOUR

1826-1881

Source Price (1954)

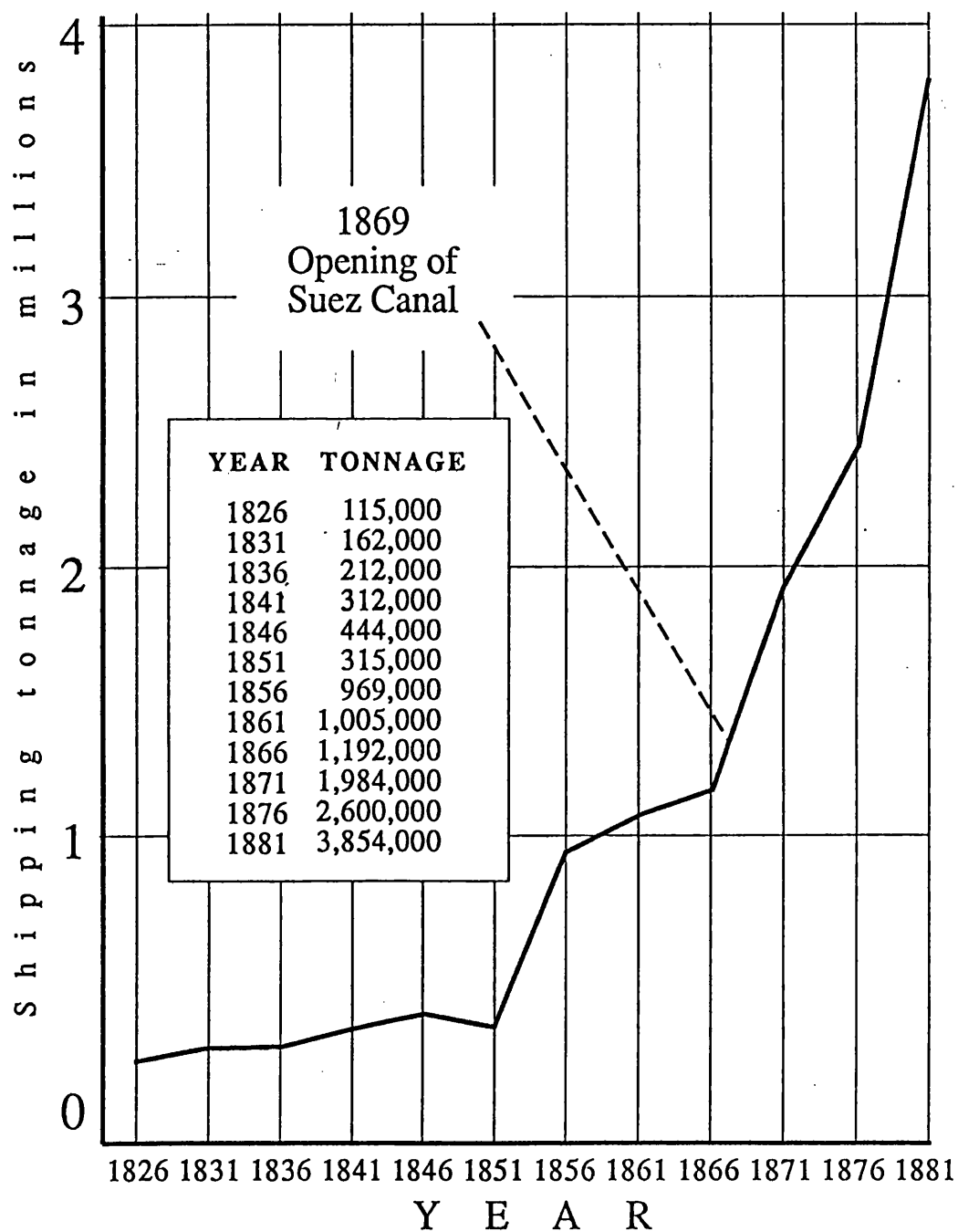


FIGURE 9:1

suggestion that the port dues charged to shipping, especially steamers, should be slightly increased.[107]

Julyan was on surer ground with respect to his proposal to transfer control over the Marine Police from the Superintendent of Police to the Superintendent of Ports, an office which combined within it ex-officio membership of the Board of Health and the duties of Chief Quarantine Officer. The duties of the Marine Police were, in fact, to ensure order in the harbours and their surrounding areas, the prompt collection of port dues, and to give pratique or to place ships under quarantine. Julyan felt that, placing the Marine Police under the authority of the Superintendent of Ports, a former British naval officer with long experience of commanding individuals under military discipline, would serve to convert this corps 'into a far more useful body of revenue protectors than they now appear to be.'[108]

Over the years visiting Commissioners to Malta had expressed astonishment if not outright condemnation at the extensive, complex and costly system of charity which they found in the Island. Julyan did not prove to be an exception. In his report, even in those parts which dealt with areas other than with the state of charitable provision in Malta, he constantly complained that, in Malta, the government does too much for the people.[109] The charities merely provided the best example of this. In effect Julyan held public charities in Malta to be, because of their 'mischievous exuberance',[110] guilty of demoralising the people. Translated into figures this exuberance amounted, in 1877, to £26,883. This represented an outlay of 3s 7d per head of the population, or nearly a twofold rise on 1836, a significant increase even when one allows for a one-third rise in the population.[111] But, as Julyan observed, the above total did not take into account the value of the buildings employed for the purpose, many of which were of recent origin and had been constructed at considerable expense. Neither did it take into account the cost of repairs, of the pensions of retired employees of the department and of the pay,

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allowances and pensions of the so-called police physicians who were not members of those institutions but acted as agents on its behalf. If all these other charges were included in the general account, wrote the Commissioner, 'the expenditure in "charity" will be found to exceed one-fifth of the whole revenue of the colony.'

In all, there were eleven separate or associated charitable establishments under the overall supervision of a Controller, nine in Malta and two in Gozo (see Diagram 9:1). Most of these institutions, although long ago removed from their original sites, traced their origin to the time of the Order of St John when each disposed of its own incomes and benefices. This, Julyan argued, had given rise to an

'erroneous impression...that the duty of maintaining all these establishments is imposed on the Government by the terms on which it succeeded to the property held by the Knights...[which] certainly includes certain foundations intended to be applied in charitable ways.' [112]

Erroneous or not, a great deal of the responsibility for this impression devolved on the British themselves, but especially on Thomas Maitland who, as we saw in Chapter Four, had thought it fit to consolidate the proceeds from these foundations with the general revenue of the government and to merge the different institutions under one authority, thereby laying the foundations for the emergence of the Department of Charitable Institutions. [113] In other words, it was the local government itself which had, in the second decade of the nineteenth century, freely took upon itself full responsibility for these institutions. Unlike Julyan, members of the public, the vast majority of whom were illiterate, had no means of knowing that, in 1877, these various foundations barely contributed £3,000 a year to the revenue, a figure quite below that spent annually in out-door relief alone. [114] But it was on the basis of such knowledge that Julyan could conclude that

'whatever the justification...to be found for the elaborate system of so-called charity, which regards every working-man, however lucrative his employment, and his belongings, as fit objects for charity, it must not be looked for in any supposed moral or equitable obligation devolving on the present Government to maintain the institutions of the Knights of St

# MALTESE GOVERNMENT CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS 1878

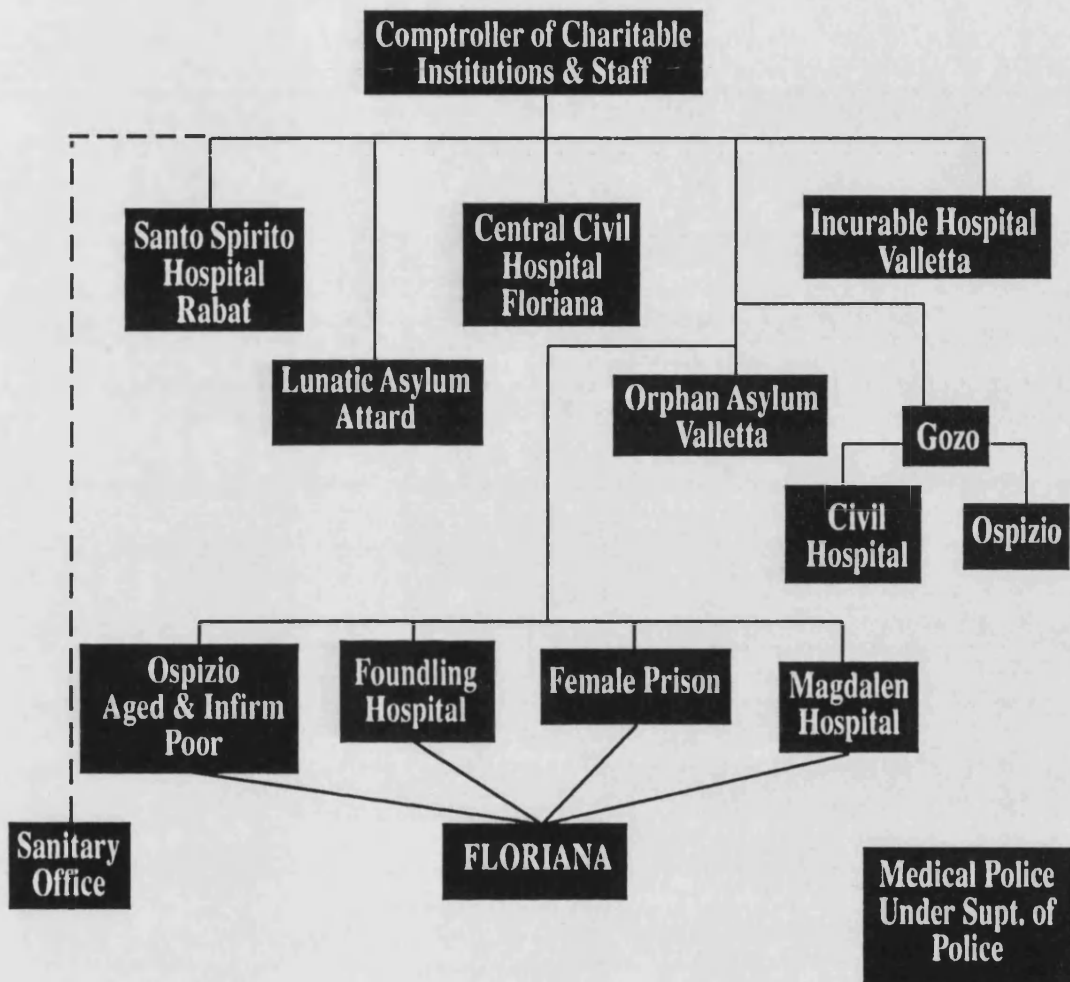


DIAGRAM 9:1

John.'[115]

Despite these pointed comments, Julyan claimed that it was outside his province to call into question 'the policy that governs the treatment of the poor in these Islands'. It was the machinery for attaining the ends of that policy that he wished to focus on. This, he considered as elaborate enough but, as he rightly pointed out, the efficient administration of such organisations depended largely on those who have to work them. In this case the responsibility fell on the Controller as Head of Department, five clerks, six unpaid Commissioners of Charity and

'a very large number of professional and non-professional employees.'[116]

At the time of the inquiry the office of Controller was vacant but even so the Commissioner found that the clerical duties of the department appeared to be satisfactorily performed. The position and performance of professional members was, however, a different matter. Julyan observed that a difficulty common to hospitals of every type, was the confusion that arose from the division of authority between lay and professional directors. In the 1840s (Chapter Seven), this problem was minimised with the creation of the office of Inspector of Prisons and Charities. Its holder, Dr Collins, was a medical man who knew, according to Julyan, how to subordinate professional interests to lay ones whenever necessity required it.[117] But, in 1859, Le Marchant had abolished this office and amalgamated its duties with those of Controller,[118] with the consequence that this latter office, the duties of which had been limited to procuring supplies for the various establishments, grew in importance until it had become the leading office. Its lay-occupant, however, had found it impossible to impose his authority over the professional staff or, indeed, to influence relations between the latter and other lay employees. In his Report Julyan stressed the importance of this authority being exercised as well as the need to find a qualified person for the office of Controller. Nonetheless, he did not believe that one could be found in the local

service, nor did he wish to see the appointment entrusted to a Maltese professional. He thought that the best course for the local government would be to reinstitute the office of Inspector of Charities and to obtain for it the services of an experienced army medical officer who, if necessary, could be called upon to act as mediator in disputes between the Controller and the doctors.

The issue of professional employees, however, did not end there. About twenty-eight other doctors, all on the pensionable establishment and free to practice their profession privately, were at the time employed as Police Physicians charged with providing medical relief for the poor. Julyan deemed their number excessive, the result, in his view, of a system under which

‘everybody in Malta who lives by daily labour, that is every working-man, as well as every beggar, is considered to have a claim to receive medical assistance and medicines gratuitously, when he or any member of his family is ill...’[119]

It was also a system which, doctors claimed, depressed their profession. On the one hand, some doctors felt, for example, that the title of Police Physicians tended to lower their standing in the eyes of the community. On the other hand, as the large majority of the population were reluctant to pay for medical assistance when it could be obtained for free, Maltese doctors also tended to find it difficult to obtain an independent living. They were, therefore, ‘eager to be subsidised by the Government, and nearly all dissatisfied that the subsidy’,[120] was not greater than it was. Moreover, they were not subject to effective control. The principal reason for this was that, in theory, they came under the charge of the Superintendent of Police (hence their name), but since their work had no connection with his department they were practically independent of his control.

The Commissioner preferred that the staff of Police Physicians should be completely abolished but he accepted that the Government appeared ‘to be committed’ to its system of medical charity. Furthermore, he felt that if

this form of charity was suddenly withdrawn, a large part of the population would find 'itself without any medical assistance at all'. Julyan proposed, instead, that their number of Police Physicians should be reduced from twenty-eight to sixteen, their designation changed to District Medical Officers and that

'for all administrative purposes they should be subject to the Controller of Charitable Institutions'.

He also wished to see something done about the issue of private practice. This issue had engaged the attention of the Colonial Office for the first time in the autumn of 1872. At that time, colonial officials had initially resisted the Governor's application for a pension on behalf of a government employed doctor, on the ground, that the latter had been allowed the private practice of his profession.[121] One official wrote that

'if Malta stood alone, I should think that the Governor's views might be adopted without much hesitation; but...how far a new rule can be recognised for Malta, without its being extended to other colonies also'[122]

was questionable. The fact was that this system had always been in operation in Malta and it was only now that the Colonial Office had discovered that it existed. Nonetheless, Herbert Taylor held to a different view from that of his colleagues. 'I think' he minuted,

'the circumstances of Malta should make it an exception to the ordinary rule, and we may do well not to disturb an arrangement which is apparently economical and efficient.'[123]

The Secretary of State had concurred with Taylor but stressed that he would resist its introduction in other colonies.[124] Julyan himself was inclined towards a system whereby competent outsiders were paid fees for such work as was actually performed by them on behalf of the department.[125]

Another government section which Julyan wished to see placed under the charge of the Controller of Charitable Institutions, with strict instructions to keep down by every means its expenditure, was the Sanitary Office. This department was created in 1875 when policies which aimed to improve the sanitary condition of Malta were introduced. Julyan considered 'some organisation of the sort...doubtlessly necessary',[126] but felt that

many of the services it provided could be equally performed within existing departments. Furthermore, he saw in this office

‘rather more than the germs of a very large and costly addition to the number of Government Departments.’[127]

Already twenty-four persons, some of them holding other offices in the administration, were receiving salaries from this department to the amount of £690 per annum. Julyan advised, therefore, that the inordinate growth of this ‘enfant terrible among the organisations for spending money in Malta’ should be resisted ‘by all legitimate means.’

Having concluded his examination of the so-called Charitable Institutions Julyan turned his attention to the Police Department and the Judiciary. As we have seen earlier Julyan favoured the transfer of both the Marine Police branch and of the Police Physicians from the Police Department to the Port Department and the Charitable Institutions respectively. This left him with the task of examining the Interior Police branch. Julyan stated that while he was unable to say whether its existing numerical strength was sufficient, its quality left much to be desired. The Commissioner found that the service was held in very low esteem by the public and that applicants for admission were quite often of a questionable character. Neither were members given any sort of training. Nor were they subjected to a proper discipline and they were free to relinquish their employment merely at a day’s notice. Two-thirds of them were unable to write their own names and nearly all were ignorant of the English language. Julyan concluded that the condition of the force was

‘evidently by no means such as should be expected in a body of men intended to protect the public against evil-doers.’[128]

The solution he proposed, apart from proper training and discipline, was to attract recruits ‘from a more respectable portion of the community’ even if this meant paying higher salaries. But of more importance was the appointment of a suitable head. The practice of appointing one or another of the Chief Clerks by way of promotion, Julyan considered misguided. He

wrote, that

'the duties of a Superintendent of Police are such that, without special training, he can hardly be expected to interest himself in the work entrusted to him, or...to secure the assistance of his subordinates.'

He preferred to see at the head of this corps an officer with military training and he believed that a suitable individual could be found in one of the local regiments.[129]

When examining the Courts of Justice, Julyan declared that no legal

'knowledge is requisite to see that this machinery is far more elaborate and cumbersome than it need be, and that any improvement that can be effected in it must be a great advantage'[130]

to one of the poorest communities in the British Empire. He blamed for this state of affairs both the government, for making litigation easy, and the lawyers, for encouraging it, although he found the latter's case wholly understandable. He observed that,

'in an island so oversupplied with lawyers as Malta, it is hardly surprising that efforts of all sorts should be made to promote litigation, but it appears...to be the duty of the Government, in the interests of the unfortunate suitors themselves, most decidedly to discourage such practices.'

The Government could do this in his opinion, in three ways. First, by abolishing the right of appeal against the decisions of either the City or district Magistrates Courts when the amount was trivial. Second, by ensuring, as was not the case, that all judicial fees be promptly paid. Third, that as in other countries, the parties to every suit should be required to furnish the necessary copies of all original papers.[131]

'The system of doing gratuitously for the public what it ought to do for itself...should be systematically discouraged throughout this and all other branches of the public service'

insisted Julyan, for this was in his view 'a special affliction in Malta.'[132]

Altogether the judicial establishments of Malta consisted of two types of inferior courts and five superior courts, and the Crown Advocate's establishment, employing nearly one-hundred and thirty employees at an annual cost, exclusive of pensions and buildings, of £15,631. The first of

the inferior courts was that of the Syndics, or districts courts. These had come into existence in 1839 after Austin and Lewis had recommended the abolition of the office of Lord Lieutenant. Each was presided over by an advocate, his duties being those of a civil magistrate, senior Police Officer, representative of the Land Revenue and Public Works Department, and of the Department of Charitable Institutions, and in 'a quasi-patriarchal nature'[133] of village head. Julyan thought that the judicial duties of these 'amiable and intelligent "heads of the villages"' should be enlarged and that their designation be changed from Syndic to District Magistrate. In fact Julyan wished to transfer to these courts some of the duties, such as those of deciding contraventions and minor offences, of the City Magistrates Courts, the second type of inferior courts in Malta. In compensation, he recommended that the geographic jurisdiction of the latter courts be extended to include some of the new suburbs of Valletta and the three Cities, notably Sliema, Msida, and Zabbar. On the one hand, however, in the interests of efficiency, he proposed that District Magistrates should in future be eligible for promotion as City Magistrates and that the salaries of the latter should be augmented. On the other hand, in the interests of justice, he recommended the introduction of a rule

'prescribing a triennial interchange of districts to the District Magistrates in order that there may be no risk of local associations interfering with the impartial exercise of their powers.'[134]

The Superior Courts of Malta consisted of a Criminal Court, a Civil Court, divided into First and Second Halls, a Commercial Court, and a Court of Appeal. In his report Julyan gave warning that the reforms which he intended to propose might have to be 'enforced',[135] for he expected strong opposition to them from the legal profession, as well as the civil service. His recommendations were indeed radical - abolition of the Commercial Court and of the Second Hall of the Civil Court - although in every case Julyan was supported by Sir Antonio Micallef, the President of



the Court of Appeal and Chief Justice.[136] Apart from the fact that the work done in these courts could easily be accommodated in the remaining three courts of justice, their abolition, the Commissioner argued, tended to

'facilitate a complete revision of their clerical and semi-clerical establishments, and lead ultimately to a considerable reduction in staff.'[137]

Indeed, Julyan estimated that at least the services of six clerks and three copyists would no longer be necessary, a net saving to the government of around £600 a year. When to these one added the savings arising from other reforms, such as the requirement that Magistrates should take down the depositions themselves, thus removing the need for the retention of other clerks, and the transfer to the Public Registry of the work done in the Court Registries, he expected overall economies of over £1,000 within this branch of the public service.

The Crown Advocate's establishment attracted Julyan's attention more as a consequence of the controversy surrounding the holder of its chief office than for any other reason. But having no wish to add fuel to this controversy, in his formal report, the Commissioner restricted his comments to the duties and qualities of the Crown Advocate. These duties were in theory of a legal character. The Crown Advocate, wrote Julyan, was

'largely responsible for the conduct of prosecutions...as counsel for the Government...has charge of all its civil suits; he is, moreover, its legal adviser on all other affairs...prepares all its legislative regulations, and has a very large share in all legislative schemes presented to the Council of Government and submitted to Her Majesty's Secretary of State'.[138]

In practice, however, because the occupant of that office - Sir Adrian Dingli - was 'a gentleman of such rare ability and well-earned eminence', other duties and responsibilities had been over time added to his legal chores. He had become in fact

'one of the principal advisers and agents of the Governor on all matters of public importance.'

Julyan opined that both the local and the home governments had every

reason to 'congratulate themselves on commanding the services of so talented an auxiliary', but added quickly that, when those services were no longer available, his successor's duties 'should be strictly restricted in accordance with the rank and functions assigned to him by law.' He expressed the hope that this occasion may yet be 'very distant.' In a private letter to the Secretary of State, however, Julyan advised that, at the first opportunity, 'hopefully at no distant date',[139] the government should promote Dingli to the position of Judge and President of the Court of Appeal and, was Dingli to refuse promotion, then the Colonial Office should not hesitate to force it upon him.

The reasons for this insistence were graphically stated in the rest of the letter. Julyan argued that Dingli's 'supposed irresistible influence over all Governors and his alleged Machiavelian tendencies in politics' had rendered him 'the most unpopular public man in the Island, and every distasteful measure' by the government was attributed - with much injustice thought the Commissioner - to him. So entrenched in the public mind was this belief that, although Dingli was a brilliant man and an asset to any government, it tended to neutralize the value of his real abilities and to add to the political difficulties of the government. Furthermore, Julyan expected Dingli to be one of the leading opponents of his proposals, a view in which the Colonial Office concurred.[140]

Having examined the revenue, charitable and legal departments, Julyan turned his attention to the Audit Department, treating it last because, in his own words, it had 'to do with all the others.'[141] In fact the Commissioner found that the system practised in Malta, whereby the accounts of departments were submitted for audit in one inclusive statement, tended to defeat the *raison d'être* for the very existence of this establishment. It was by no means a state of affairs unknown to either the local or home authorities. In 1876, Straubenzee, supported by the elected members, had requested Colonial Office permission to altogether abolish 'the almost

sinecure office of Auditor-General'.[142] Their request was, however, rejected on the ground that upon the thoroughness of the Audit depended 'the effective financial administration of the Government.'[143] Julyan fully concurred with this view, arguing that it was 'most desirable that an independent audit should be preserved',[144] especially since there were in Malta no professional accountants or auditors to whom the periodic examination of public accounts could be entrusted. It was, therefore, the only 'safe course open to the Government.' Julyan's solution was threefold. First, he recommended that the Auditor-General should also be appointed Director of Contracts with responsibility for chairing the Contract Committee, for preparing all the details prior to the approval of tenders, and for the formal completion of the documents. Second, that the responsibility for preparing all papers connected with the Annual and Supplementary Estimates should be transferred from the Chief Secretary's Office to that of the Auditor. Once the papers had been prepared they were to be submitted to a Finance Committee - yet to be created - composed of the Chief Secretary as Chairman, the Auditor-General himself, the Receiver-General and the Collector of Customs. It was to be the Auditor's duty to tabulate the estimates, explain their details to the Finance Committee and subsequently, as a member of the Council of Government, expound the several items for the approval of the latter body. Finally, Julyan recommended that the Auditor-General should be made responsible for collecting all materials necessary for the publication of the Government Gazette and the Annual Blue Book,[145] tasks normally carried out by the Chief Secretary's Office. It becomes apparent from the foregoing propositions that Julyan's intention was to alter the role of the Audit-Office from one of nominal financial policeman to one with extensive opportunity for overview. He intended the Contract Committee and the Finance Committee, in which the Audit-Office was to have the leading role, as regulatory bodies making sure that no measure involving the expenditure

of public funds was adopted without either the knowledge or consent of the Auditor-General.

Other issues, of a more general nature, but which Julyan felt required examination including the existing system of promotion, revision of the Civil List, and the amalgamation of the whole clerical staff into classes. In a brief note to Julyan, Victor Houlton, the Chief Secretary, had asserted, that the system of departmental promotion up to Clerk No. 1 and of inter-departmental promotion, according to seniority but coupled with efficiency, from Chief Clerk upwards

‘had always worked admirably well, both in the interest of the public and of the civil servants’.[146]

In contrast, the Commissioner dismissed the system as nothing more than a combination of ‘somewhat arbitrary arrangements’[147] and felt that the clerks had every reason to be dissatisfied with their prospects. Like Rowsell, he found that, in Malta,

‘chance or favour can have an important effect in determining the prospects of different Clerks for promotion.’[148]

A clerk who happened to be in a department in which several vacancies occurred in a relatively short period of time succeeded in attaining the position of Clerk No. 1 in his department before other clerks who, though senior to him in the service, remained behind owing to the fact that few vacancies had arisen in their departments. Julyan demonstrated this practically, by examining the progress made by clerks appointed in 1857 and 1863. In each case, he found, that the most junior of the entrants enjoyed a position and a salary which were higher or equal to those of the most senior entrant in his year and, at times, of those of preceding years. Julyan argued that the merits of the advantaged individuals, though full of promise, did not lessen ‘the just grievances of the men who have been practically...superseded’.[149] Some form of redress was obtained when a vacancy for a Chief Clerkship occurred, for the local government had a tendency of appointing to it the most senior clerk. But, it often happened

that, whenever such a vacancy did arise it generally did so in some department in which the prospective candidate had never served and consequently could not 'be expected to show any particular aptitude' towards its duties. This, Julyan contended, was 'another evil consequence of the existing arrangements, affecting the Government rather than its employes.'

Julyan thought that, 'the only equitable and expedient arrangement', in such a small place like Malta where each department had only a small number of clerks, was to

'constitute one general establishment of Clerks, all of whom, if they display an average amount of intelligence and industry, shall have a right to advance towards the highest emoluments that the Government can afford to pay them, and who may look forward to ultimately earning, by special industry and intelligence, promotion to the superior position held by Heads of Departments.'

He proposed, therefore, that as a first step 'all distinctive titles such as Chief Clerk, Clerk No. 1, Computist' and so on, be abolishd and that other titles, such as Registrars and Assistant-Registrars be retained only for convenience of reference without, however, 'constituting any barrier between their holders and other clerks.' Second, that the whole clerical establishment be divided into four classes consisting of fifteen clerks each (see below). This meant that the existing establishment of ninety-five full-time clerks would have to be reduced over time to sixty clerks. Julyan cautioned that, in fairness to those involved, this could only be achieved gradually. Indeed, there was a number of 'elderly Civil Servants who, from their ignorance of the English language, or from other defects',[150] were comparatively useless and the Commissioner believed that they could be pensioned right away. But there were others, much younger and more capable, whose offices would become redundant as a result of the reforms he proposed. He hoped that at least some of these would be kept on until vacancies became available.

PROPOSED CLASSIFICATION			
CLASS	STARTING SALARY	YEARLY INCREMENTS	MAXIMUM SALARY
Fourth	£60	£4	£80
Third	£90	£5	£120
Second	£130	£5	£180
First	£190	£10	£250

Finally, whenever a vacancy occurred, promotion from one class to another was to be by seniority, provided the Governor was satisfied, by the Head of Department in which the officer in line for promotion was serving, that he was 'in all respects worthy of advancement'. [151] Julyan stressed that great care should be taken to see 'that none but suitable men are promoted', and that 'the rigour of selection should be increased for each higher grade'. Julyan, however, wished the government to place less emphasis on seniority when it came to selecting Heads of Departments. In a private letter to the Secretary of State he had stated that, apart from Dingli and Inglott,

'Heads of Departments were men of inferior intellectual capacity, possessing little or no power of organization, and quite unfitted to render...assistance and advice in matters connected with the Civil Administration of the Island.' [152]

Neither were the Chief Clerks, from whom Heads of Departments were normally chosen any better, affording, in his view, 'but scant material out of which to form improved successors.' Nor did he consider the few British officers employed in the civil service of the island to be superior to their Maltese colleagues. He wrote that

'truth compels me to add that the natives...have little or nothing to learn in the management of their respective Departments from the Englishmen now in the service.' [153]

It was among those recruited after 1857 that, Julyan believed, the

government had to look to in the future to find suitable Heads of Departments. Julyan told Hicks Beach that 'the competitive system' had given to the service in Malta

'a better class of clerks generally than those who are now in the front ranks and after these younger men shall have attained somewhat more official experience',

he thought it possible to choose from among them.[154] Thus, in his Report he recommended that, in choosing Heads of Departments, the authorities should

'not only feel themselves at liberty, but should make it their duty, to choose for each post the fittest man that can be found, in whatever grade or branch of the service he may be.'[155]

The Commissioner also hoped that the reductions he had proposed would make a slight and gradual increase in salaries possible. He believed that his scheme, by allocating salaries on the basis of classes rather than on the basis of seniority in a given department, was much fairer, giving to all a greater prospect of a higher salary after long service than they could expect under the prevailing system. Moreover, he thought it right that, clerks who had been in the service for fifteen or twenty years, should 'secure most advantage'[156] from the proposed salary scales for each class. He hoped that this would somehow serve to relieve them, burdened as many of them were with large families, from their difficult financial situation. Nevertheless, Julyan argued that the improvement in salaries could have been more marked were it not for the government's lack of foresight in allowing itself to be burdened with a large number of subordinate employees, such as storekeepers, gaugers, warders, nurses, boatmen and messengers, many of whom, 'being permanent servants of the Government',[157] were entitled to regular wages and the prospect of pensions. He insisted, like Rowsell, that the local government should be made to abandon this practice. 'In Malta' he wrote,

'even more than in many other colonies, there is a constant effort to fasten upon the Government the responsibility of providing for crowds of dependents, who are often no better than pensioners long before they are formally superannuated; but it is almost idle to protest against this

communistic tendency unless the Government is itself firm and prudent enough to resist it.'

He proposed, therefore, that as soon as the proposed reforms were carried into effect, a new Civil List identifying the names and salaries of all civil servants and professional assistants be drawn up and that no increase be allowed to it without the sanction of the Secretary of State.

The final item for inquiry on Julyan's agenda and one which he treats in the final section of his report was that concerning the desirability of promoting the use of English as the official language of the colony. The Commissioner thought it regrettable that so little had been done, in almost eighty years of British rule, to foster the English language among the Maltese. Ineffectual as it had proved to be, Maitland's minute of 1820 had remained virtually the only official statement of policy in support of English. Worse still, indeed 'a great error',[158] in the opinion of Julyan, was Lewis's and Austin's recommendation that Italian should be preferred over English on the ground of its alleged usefulness for purposes of trade and from the general proximity of Malta to Italy and Sicily. By this 'mistaken tolerance'[159] he continued,

'political agitators have been assisted in gaining a few converts to their theory that the Maltese...are akin to the Italians, and ought to look forward to a union with the Kingdom of Italy instead of that of Great Britain'.

Reality, he argued, demonstrated conclusively that there was no foundation to this theory. According to the Census of 1861, only one person in nine professed to speak Italian and only one in ten of the population to be able to write it. There was, therefore, no real justification for continuing with the policy of preferring Italian as the official language of the colony.

In addition to political dangers, ignorance of the English language tended, according to the Commissioner, to debar the local population from participation in the advantages that membership of the British Empire was supposed to confer, notably in the field of emigration. Despite their known



industry and frugality, a large proportion of the rapidly expanding population seemed 'condemned' to a 'painful struggle for existence'[160] as the resources of the Island were far from adequate for its support. Julyan spoke of the alarming increase of pauperism, and the yet more 'alarming extent of infant mortality', and concluded that emigration appeared to be the only corrective avenue. But this, in his opinion, was obstructed by the 'insular prejudice which is fomented by the lack of sympathy with English institutions and habits.' Knowledge of the English language, Julyan believed, would remove this prejudice and eventually induce many young people to escape starvation at home by seeking better fields for enterprise in other British colonies. He was convinced, therefore, that the Government owed it to

'them as well as to itself to promote among the people, by all fair means, a knowledge of the only language that can really help them...'[161]

The most direct action that the local government could take to achieve this aim was,

'to insist on all its employes being thoroughly acquainted with English, and using it constantly, to the exclusion as far as possible of all other languages, in their relations with the public.'

The public service did appear to be the best vehicle by which the study of English could be promoted. First, civil service clerkships and other public offices were greatly sought after by young Maltese, there being, as Julyan found, a great number of candidates for every vacancy. Second, as a result of the more stringent requirements imposed upon all candidates for admission into the Civil Service by competitive examinations, proficiency in English among educated young Maltese aspirants for office had improved considerably. Indeed, as we shall see in the following Chapter, by 1878 pressure was mounting on the local government to persuade London to permit Maltese wishing to compete for commissions in the Army and Navy, or for offices in the Home or Indian Civil Service,

'to be examined in Malta under such regulations as the Civil Service Commission may deem expedient to lay down.'[162]

Twenty years earlier, when Governor Reid had first confronted Maltese graduates with the examination papers for the Home and Indian Civil Service, they had rejected the idea they could compete, claiming that their academic level was far too inferior to that of British candidates.[163] But Juylan also found that the practice of keeping books and preparing documents in Italian, as well as the general habit of clerks of conversing, while at work, in Maltese and Italian tended to encourage those proficient in English to forget nearly all they knew. The Commissioner recommended, therefore, that English should become the sole language of administration. Second, that in future, no communication with the public be made in Italian. Third, that no demand for payment or other claim upon the Government be accepted unless prepared in English. Fourth, that the number of marks for English language in competitive examinations be appreciably higher than for Italian. Finally, he recommended that no clerk be eligible for promotion from one class to another and no Head of Department or professional officer be appointed, unless he had acquired and retained a thorough knowledge of English. Having made his recommendations the Commissioner, however, declared himself opposed to the idea that the use of Italian among the educated classes should be 'in any way forcibly restrained'[164] or that the Maltese language should be eradicated. Indeed, he warned, that any attempt to interfere with the colloquial use of Maltese 'would certainly be injudicious and productive of nothing but dissatisfaction among the people.'[165]

In forwarding his Report to Hicks Beach, Secretary of State for the Colonies, Julyan stressed that the success or failure of his recommendations depended largely on the attitude adopted by Victor Houlton, the Chief Secretary, and by Adrian Dingli, the Crown Advocate. He believed that both these public officers, whom he considered to be 'primarily responsible for the present state of the Civil Establishments' were opponents of reform, and therefore, not to be depended upon. He proposed,

consequently, that such recommendations as met with the approval of the Secretary of State and which did not involve amendments to existing laws, were not to remain 'optional with the local authorities'[166] or dealt with in the Council of Government, but were to be implemented through instructions from the Colonial Office.

#### THE KEENAN MISSION

Penrose Julyan had been specifically barred, by his instructions, from inquiring into the educational establishments of Malta, this task having already been assigned to Patrick Keenan, the Resident Commissioner of National Education in Ireland.[167] Keenan's Report, submitted in June 1879, three months after Julyan had presented his, would have had little direct relevance for this study were it not that its recommendations became the subject of serious political controversy and, eventually, of crisis. Indeed, it requires a cursory look here for, as we have seen on several earlier occasions, in a bureaucratically governed society political conflict, whatever its causes, tends to have some impact on the public service of that society. For brevity's sake, Keenan's proposals may be divided into five issues. First, that in primary schools the medium of education should be Maltese and that pupils were to be taught to read their native tongue from new Maltese lesson books. The Maltese to be taught to pupils, however, was to be purified in order to bring it nearer to Arabic. Second, that the existing system of requiring children to learn two foreign languages - Italian and English - was to be abolished. English only was to be taught, but through the medium of Maltese. Italian was to be considered as an extra branch of study. Third, that as from 1st January 1881 all primary school teachers should be qualified to teach English and that in future all pupils at the Lyceum and the University should be taught through the medium of English. Fourth, that all educational fees should be increased and that the number of University professors be reduced from twelve to five. Finally, a proper department of education was to be

established.[168]

From the above recommendations it is evident that Keenan's intentions were both pedagogic and political. In the first instance, by proposing that Maltese, the only language spoken by the labouring poor and their children, should be the first language of education, the Commissioner hoped to make education truly available and effective among this class. Keenan himself found, that as the medium of education was Italian, a foreign language with which the children of the labouring poor were generally unfamiliar, the latter failed to benefit from schooling. In the circumstances of Malta, where employment opportunities for the educated sons of the middle classes were few and far between, this proposal struck at their very interests. But by proposing that the Maltese language taught in schools should be purified by having all Latin words ostracized from it, he involved himself in the controversy than brewing as to whether the Maltese were descendants of Italian settlers, and hence, European in origin, or Arabs or, indeed, as some claimed, of Phoenician stock. Finally, by proposing that English, rather than Italian should be taught in schools and other institutions of higher learning, Keenan sought, mainly, to help secure future British strategic interests in Malta.

Rowsell's Report on the taxation and expenditure of the government of Malta and Julyan's Report on the civil and clerical establishments tend to betray a strong sense of annoyance with the state of affairs which they found there, but particularly with its extensive system of paternalism. It was a system which served or benefited every so-called class of Maltese society, although, as Rowsell demonstrated, it was the labouring poor who carried the biggest share of the burden in its upkeep. But, as every class was, in economic terms, relatively poor, dependence on the state tended to be widespread. Julyan, it may be said, seemed to think, although he never expressly said so, that the whole system had given rise to a vicious circle of vested interests from which it was difficult for Maltese society to free

itself. This is particularly evident from the Commissioner's observations regarding the Police Physicians' establishment. There was, therefore, a large hint of reservation in the Reports of both Commissioners as to the chances of their proposed reforms being implemented. Strong opposition was, in fact, expected and, as we saw, Rowsell did personally experience a taste of the strong emotions that fear of retrenchment or reform could arouse among the population, even among those groups which, in the opinion of the Commissioners, had most to gain from the reform.

Keenan's Report too gave rise to staunch opposition and, eventually, Maltese society was to become divided into two unequal camps: that of the minority "Riformisti" faction led by Savona and later by Strickland, and that of the larger "Anti-Riformisti" party led by Fortunato Mizzi and later by his son Enrico. The former supported Rowsell's taxation proposals and Keenan's anglicization drive while the latter naturally opposed them. We shall trace, in the following Chapter, the direction that this conflict took as the British government sought to implement the recommendations made by Julyan and Keenan. We shall also examine the implications that this conflict had for the public service and how these were accentuated by international political developments and British strategic needs in Malta.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. Copies or Extracts of the Reports of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Affairs of the Island of Malta and of Correspondence thereupon, (1838), Count Messina Bequest, National Library, Valletta.
3. Ibid., Pt.I, p.6, et.seq.
4. Ibid., Pt.II, p.37 and Pt.II, p.12.
5. With the introduction of competitive examinations in 1857 English became immediately established as one of the main subjects.
6. Emigration was seen as the solution to all of Malta's ills, but all attempts to persuade Maltese to emigrate to other parts of the British Empire had met with failure.
7. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew, London.

8. Grant to Granville, 26 Feb. 1869, C.O.158/218, PRO, Kew, London.
9. Grant to Buckingham, 4 Dec. 1867, C.O.158/212, PRO, Kew, London.
10. Ibid.
11. Yelverton in Colonial Office mins., C.O.158/212, PRO, Kew, London.
12. Elliot min. of 14 Dec. 1867 on Grant to Buckingham, 4 Dec. 1867, PRO, Kew, London.
13. Straubenzye to Kimberley, 11 Feb. 1873, C.O.158/234, PRO, Kew, London.
14. Straubenzye to Carnarvon, 6 Mar. 1877, Despatches to the Sec. of State, Vol.13, Nov. 1874 - Oct. 1877, Palace Archives, Valletta.
15. Ibid.
16. Herbert to Rowsell, Instructions, 7 Mar. 1877, Appendix A, in Correspondence respecting the Taxation and Expenditure of Malta, (1878), C-2032, HMSO, London.
17. F.W. Rowsell, "Malta" in Nineteenth Century, Aug. 1878, p.284.
18. Herbert to Rowsell, Instructions, 7 Mar. 1877, op.cit., Appendix A.
19. Rowsell's Report, in Correspondence Respecting the Taxation and Expenditure of Malta, (1878), op.cit., p.3.
20. Ibid., p.4.
21. Ibid., p.4.
22. Ibid., p.4.
23. Ibid., Appendix M, p.44.
24. Ibid., Rowsell's Report, op.cit., p.7.
25. Ibid., Appendix S and Appendix T, both at p.50.
26. Ibid., Rowsell's Report, op.cit., p.5.
27. Ibid., pp.5-6.
28. Ibid., p.11.
29. Ibid., p.26.
30. Straubenzye to Hicks Beach, 5 Oct. 1875, Despatches to Sec. of State, Vol.13, Nov. 1874 - Oct. 1877, Palace Archives, Valletta.
31. Rowsell's Report, op.cit., p.26.
32. Ibid., pp.26-27.
33. Ibid., Appendix M, p.44.
34. Penrose G. Julyan, (1880), Report on the Civil Establishments of

Malta, Eyre & Spottiswode, C-2684, HMSO, London.

35. Straubenzee to Carnarvon, 25 Feb. 1876, C.O.158/244, PRO, Kew, London.

36. See, for example, Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew, London.

37. Under the Order the establishment was called the Segreto (see Chapter Two). From 1800 to 1814 it was simply known as the Board for the Administration of Crown Property.

38. Rowsell's Report, op.cit., p.8.

39. Ibid., pp.20-1.

40. Ibid., p.27.

41. Rowsell to Carnarvon, filed with Borton to Carnarvon, 4 Feb. 1878, C.O.158/249, PRO, Kew, London.

42. C.O. mins. on Rowsell to Carnarvon as above.

43. Grant to Granville, 11 Oct. 1869, C.O.158/220, PRO, Kew, London.

44. Rowsell's Report, op.cit., p.27.

45. Ibid., pp.27-8.

46. Ibid., p.28.

47. Ibid., p.28.

48. Ibid., p.28.

49. Ibid., p.28 and p.30.

50. Ibid., p.27.

51. Ibid., p.27.

52. The Austin and Lewis Commission had made, as we saw in Chapter Six, a determined attempt to introduce the principles of the British Poor Law (Amendment) Act of the 1830s in Malta. So did More O'Ferrall (Chapter Seven), but his attempt had provoked such an outcry that he did not push forward with his policy.

53. Rowsell's Report, p.27.

54. Rowsell to Carnarvon, filed with Borton to Carnarvon, 4 Feb. 1878, C.O.158/249, PRO, Kew, London.

55. Rowsell's Report, op.cit., p.30.

56. Ibid., p.30.

57. Ibid., p.30.

58. Ibid., pp.285-6.

59. Graham min. on Borton to Hicks Beach, 4 Feb. 1878, C.O.158/249, PRO,

Kew, London.

60. Hicks-Beach to Straubenzee, 4 May 1878, in Correspondence respecting the Taxation...(1878), op.cit., p.54.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

63. A.V. Laferla, (1946), British Malta, Aquilina & Co, Valletta, Vol.II, pp.7-8.

64. Kimberley to Borton, 4 Apr. 1881, C.O.158/259, PRO, Kew, London.

65. Herbert min. on Straubenzee to Carnarvon, 15 Mar. 1878, C.O.158/249, PRO, Kew, London.

66. Dingli to Borton, 16 Mar. 1878, encl. in Borton to Hicks-Beach, 18 Mar. 1878, C.O.158/249, PRO, Kew, London.

67. "Remarks on the Taxation of Malta and specially in connection with the Bread Tax", (1876), published anonymously but attributed to Victor Houlton.

68. Kimberley to Borton, 4 Apr. 1881, C.O.158/259, PRO, Kew, London.

69. Julyan, for example, held Dingli to be an opponent of reform but he also saw him as a loyal and able public servant.

70. Dingli to Borton, 4 Jul. 1879, encls. in Borton to Hicks-Beach, 7 Jul. 1879, C.O.158/252, PRO, Kew, London.

71. C.O. mins. on above.

72. As Note 66 above.

73. Dingli to Borton, 16 Mar. 1878, encl. in Borton to Hicks-Beach, 18 Mar. 1878, C.O.158/249, PRO, Kew, London.

74. Borton to Hicks-Beach, 17 Apr. 1879, C.O.158/252, PRO, Kew, London.

75. Herbert to Julyan, 12 Oct. 1878, Instructions, in P.G. Julyan, (1880), Report on the Civil Establishments of Malta, C-2684, HMSO, Appendix A.

76. Min. on Straubenzee to Carnarvon, 29 Jan. 1876, C.O.158/244, PRO, Kew, London.

77. Herbert to Julyan, 12 Oct. 1878, Instructions, in P.G. Julyan, op.cit., Appendix A.

78. Ibid.

79. The last inquiry into the Civil Establishments of Malta was that which had been conducted by John Austin and George Cornwall Lewis in 1836-1838. See Chapter Six.

80. P.G. Julyan, (1880), op.cit., p.1.

81. Ibid., Appendix A and p.3.

82. Ibid., p.2.



83. Ibid., p.3.
84. Ibid., p.4.
85. Ibid., p.6.
86. Julyan recommended that the preparation of the annual estimates and the issuing of professional warrants should be transferred from the Chief Secretary's department to other departments. He also suggested that the resignation of out-going letters and of letters and papers of no reference value should be dropped. Ibid., p.6.
87. Ibid., p.7. and p.6.
88. Ibid., p.8.
89. Ibid., p.10.
90. Ibid., p.8.
91. Ibid., p.11.
92. Ibid., p.12.
93. See also copies or Extracts of the Reports of the Commissioners, (1838), op.cit., Pt.I.
94. P.G. Julyan, op.cit., p.11.
95. Ibid, p.11.
96. Ibid., p.13.
97. Ibid., p.10.
98. Ibid., p.14.
99. Julyan to Hicks Beach, 7 Apr. 1879, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
100. P.G. Julyan, op.cit., p.16.
101. Ibid., p.19.
102. Julyan to Hicks Beach, 7 Apr. 1879, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
103. Ibid.
104. Storks to Cardwell, 30 Mar. 1865, C.O.158/206, PRO, Kew, London.
105. P.G. Julyan, op.cit., p.17.
106. See Grant to Buckingham, 4 Dec. 1867, C.O.158/212, PRO, Kew, London.
107. Straubenzee to Carnarvon, 6 Mar. 1877, Despatches to Sec. of State, Vol.13, Nov. 1874 - Oct. 1877, Palace Archives, Valletta.
108. P.G. Julyan, op.cit., p.20.
109. Ibid., p.13.

110. Ibid., p.30.
111. This figure is derived by subtracting the per capita cost of 1838 as presented in the Commissioners' Report of the same year from that of 1877.
112. P.G. Julyan, op.cit., p.24.
113. See Chapter Four.
114. P.G. Julyan, op.cit., p.24.
115. Ibid., p.25.
116. Ibid., p.25.
117. Ibid., p.28; and More O'Ferrall to Grey, 15 Apr. 1848, C.O.158/140, PRO, Kew, London.
118. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew, London.
119. P.G. Julyan, op.cit., p.29.
120. Ibid., p.30.
121. Straubenzye to Kimberley, 25 Oct. 1872, C.O.158/232, PRO, Kew, London.
122. Min. of 5 Nov. 1872, on above C.O.158/232, PRO, Kew, London.
123. Herbert Taylor min. of 6 Nov. 1872, also on above. C.O.158/232, PRO, Kew, London.
124. Kimberley min. of 10 Nov. 1872, on Straubenzye of 25 Oct. 1872, C.O.158/232, PRO, Kew, London.
125. P.G. Julyan, op.cit., p.29.
126. Ibid., p.30.
127. Ibid., p.31.
128. Ibid., p.22.
129. Ibid., p.22.
130. Ibid., p.37.
131. Ibid., p.39, pp.45-6.
132. Ibid., p.45.
133. Ibid., p.38.
134. Ibid., p.40.
135. Ibid., p.42.
136. Julyan to Hicks Beach, 7 Apr. 1879, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
137. P.G. Julyan, op.cit., p.43.

138. Ibid., p.48.
139. Julyan to Hicks Beach, 7 Apr. 1879, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
140. Ibid.
141. P.G. Julyan, op.cit., p.48.
142. Straubenzee to Carnarvon, 14 Jan. 1876, Despatches to Sec. of State, Vol.13, Nov. 1874-Oct. 1877, Palace Archives, Valletta.
143. Carnarvon to Straubenzee, 31 Jan. 1876, C.O.158/244, PRO, Kew, London.
144. P.G. Julyan, op.cit., p.48.
145. Ibid., p.49.
146. Houlton to Julyan, Memorandum in Julyan, op.cit.
147. P.G. Julyan, op.cit., p.51.
148. Ibid., p.52.
149. Ibid., p.52.
150. Ibid., p.53.
151. Ibid., p.53.
152. Ibid., p.53.
153. Julyan to Hicks Beach, 7 Apr. 1879, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
154. Ibid.
155. P.G. Julyan, op.cit., p.54.
156. Ibid., p.54.
157. Ibid., p.55.
158. Ibid., p.57.
159. Ibid., p.56.
160. Ibid., p.56.
161. Ibid., p.57.
162. Proposal by S. Savona in the Council of Government, in Straubenzee to Hicks Beach, 4 May 1878, published in Correspondence Relating to Question of Making Malta a Centre for Civil Service, Naval, and Military Examinations, (1884), C-4187, HMSO, London.
163. See Chapter Seven.
164. P.G. Julyan. op.cit., p.56.
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167. H.I. Lee, (1972), *Malta 1813-1914: A Study in Constitutional and Strategic Development*, Progress Press, Valletta, p.180.

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## CHAPTER TEN

### IN THE EYE OF THE STORM: THE IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON THE PUBLIC SERVICE: 1879-1903

In the years 1878-1879, with the Reports of all three Commissioners in its hands, Colonial Office attention was directed at their evaluation and to questions connected with their implementation. This evaluation, as we shall see in this Chapter, was somewhat conditioned by the growing superpowers rivalry[1] and the prospect of a second Anglo-Russian war.[2] As each Report arrived on their desks colonial officials discussed their contents, first within the department, and later with the Governor and his officials in Malta. Once a decision had been reached, instructions were usually sent out to the Governor advising him on how to proceed. But as Hyder has observed, the initial decision is merely the starting-point of the policy process and various factors - organisational, environmental, political and others - gain greater prominence at the implementation stage.[3] Others have argued that successful policy implementation, or reform, must take stock of the attitudes and vested interests of the implementing agency's staff, of its clients, and of the general public.[4] These actors are not, as it is sometimes supposed, neutral agents within a rational policy process. But, it must also be said that, independently of existing attitudes or levels of support or opposition, not infrequently, policy success or failure is conditioned by the abilities of those entrusted with its implementation. These views receive strong support in this Chapter for it will be shown that a large number of the reforms endorsed by the Colonial Office were either never implemented[5] or, as Julyan himself put it, were 'improved out of existence'.[6] Resistance to change came from Governors and civil servants as well as political leaders and, frequently, from a coalition of civil servants and politicians. Having said that, however, it must also be said that similar patterns applied in the case of reforms which enjoyed the support of one group or both. At this stage two examples may suffice. First, we have already seen in the previous

Chapter, how a coalition of civil servants and all but one of the elected members, had successfully defeated Colonial Office efforts to reform the bread tax.[7] Second, we shall see below, that, in 1880, Government and Opposition were to join together to press the Colonial Office to advance, by six months, the implementation of Julyan's proposed amalgamation and division of the clerical establishment into classes.[8]

Colonial Office officials were not oblivious to these difficulties. They expected opposition from Houlton, Dingli and other civil servants in Malta[9] but, very often, they viewed opposition to reform not as a defence of vested interests, but as an intrinsic racial characteristic of the Maltese. Thus, Herbert advised Hicks Beach, that 'public dissemination and discussion' of Julyan's Report,

'would destroy its usefulness and greatly increase the difficulty of carrying out either the suggested reforms or those modifications of them which in many cases may be found preferable'

on the ground that it was 'quite unsuitable for publication among an Oriental community.'[10] For his part, Hicks Beach expected political opposition to Julyan's Report and informed the Governor that, if necessary, he was prepared to legislate by Orders-in-Council in order to implement the reforms.[11] .

There were, in fact, two sides to each of the Commissioners' Reports. One side, which formed the greater bulk of the Reports, aimed for a reform of systems and organizations. Its second feature can best be described as a political statement. The first is easily discernable, for the primary concern of each Commission was with reform of one kind or another. Rowsell's task, for example, was to propose reforms in the existing system of taxation in Malta. He did not, as we have seen, recommend a departure from the existing system of indirect taxation to one based on more direct methods, such as an income tax. He found in Malta, as the Royal Commissions of 1812 and of 1836 had found, too much opposition on this score.[12] He proposed, instead, a shift in emphasis and in the incidence of taxation on

the different classes of society. But Rowsell also suggested certain reforms in the organization of the civil service of the island, such as its division into classes, and made a strong appeal for a reform in the educational system in Malta. The bulk of Julyan's Report was concerned with changing practices and structures within the public service itself. It was, according to Herbert at the Colonial Office, a report which probed and laid bare 'the body politic'[13] in a useful manner. Julyan examined, as we saw, every department of government and recommended reforms. He also suggested reforms in the way promotions in the civil service were conferred and expanded on Rowsell's proposed division of the service into classes. Keenan's main concern was with systems, i.e. the reform of the system of public education to be found in Malta at the time. To this he dedicated the best part of his Report. But he too attended to questions of organization and, as we have seen, proposed the creation of a Department of Education. This meant, in practice, that public education would no longer be considered as a quasi-charitable undertaking but as an activity in its own right.

The second element of the Reports, i.e. their political statement, is equally readily discernable. In Julyan's and Keenan's case, it concerned language and, eventually gave rise to what has become known as the "language question". Both men were of the view that the solution to Malta's social and economic problems, as well as of those connected with British strategic interests in Malta, was to be found in the adoption of a vigorous policy of anglicization. Hence, Julyan wrote not only of the benefits that such a policy would confer, mainly through the creation of prospects for emigration to more prosperous portions of the Empire, but of the dangers that it would help to combat, notably of Maltese aspiration for unification with Italy. In his Report Rowsell never said as much but, in an article on Malta, which he published in the August 1878 edition of 'Nineteenth Century', he left no doubt as to his position on the subject. 'It is', he

wrote,

'a curious instance of English deference to established facts that Italian...established [in Malta] for reasons which have passed away and by a government [the Order of St John] which has been blotted out, is still the language of the Courts, is still allowed to be used in the Legislative Council, though not understood by the bulk of the people, nor by the English.'[14]

The two elements outlined above are treated, were feasible, as two separate themes in this Chapter. Colonial Office attempts to implement the administrative reforms proposed by Julyan, and in some instances, by Keenan, will be discussed first. We shall see that, roughly speaking, they occupied the period 1879 to 1883, although by 1882 colonial officials could already gauge the kind of results that their efforts had obtained.[15] The second theme covers the period from about 1883, the time when opposition to the Government's language policy first became truly organized, to 1903 at which stage the crisis over language between Malta and Britain reached its climax. It is a fairly long period during which several developments, nearly all having some bearing on the public service, took place.

In the first instance, there was the formation of the "anti-riformisti" faction which, under the leadership of lawyer Fortunato Mizzi, provided stiff opposition to most of the reforms proposed by the Commissioners. But their principal aim was to have Italian language retained as the official language of Malta. They were not opposed to a wider diffusion of English. Indeed, some of them had been active in promoting the establishment of a fee-paying English school run by the English Jesuits.[16] They also accepted that a good knowledge of English would increase the chances of educated Maltese finding employment in Malta and other parts of the Empire. They, in fact, strongly supported Savona's efforts to induce the British Government to allow the holding, in Malta, of the examinations for commissions in the British Army and Navy, and for the Home and Indian Civil Service.[17] In other words, their opposition to anglicization sprang from a defence of vested interests. Frendo, in his study of Maltese political parties admits as much but he prefers to see it



mainly as part of the struggle for greater constitutional liberties.[18]

Many civil servants because the language issue touched their interests too, openly sympathized with the stance of the opposition. But, this support could only be maintained at a price. As civil servants constituted a large proportion of the electorate the anti-riformisti found that on issues which touched directly on the private interests of public servants they were obliged to adopt positions - especially where salaries were concerned - dictated by these same public servants. We shall see, therefore, that as a result of these two factors, discipline in the public service was to become seriously affected.

A second important development was the introduction, in 1887, of Representative Government. It was a measure which defied all logic. After 1883 Government and opposition became locked in a struggle over the "language question". The British Government, although willing to make concessions in favour of the Italian language, was not prepared to abandon its policy of making English the official language, and eventually the second language, after Maltese, of Malta. As one colonial official put it, it was 'not only Imperial Interests but Imperial Duty' that called on Britain 'to see that the language of the Empire holds its proper - that is an advantageous - place'[19] in the educational curriculum of dependency. But the elected members proved equally intransigent in their stand. Gradually, but systematically, the "anti-reformisti" adopted a course of action which aimed to undermine what vestige of confidence of the people might have had in the existing Council and ultimately, to bring its business to a standstill. This policy led colonial officials and Heads of Departments to the conclusion, that the remedy for Malta's political problems, was the withdrawal of the 1849 Constitution and the re-institution of a nominated advisory Council.[20] Events seemed destined to follow this direction when Sir Henry Holland, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, was swayed by a Maltese plan for representative

government.[21]

Representative government brought with it a short respite in the conflict and efforts were made, by both sides, to heal some of the damage inflicted on the civil service. Within less than a year a new reorganisation of the clerical staff, of the Police Physicians staff, of the Public Works Department, and of the Police had been undertaken. But, by 1892, agitation for responsible government was already threatening the 1887 Constitution. Worse still, by 1895, the "language question" was again to be found at the top of the political agenda. As the conflict mounted the elected members found, that the earlier Colonial Office disposition to make concessions to Malta, had all but dissipated. Instead, they found a resolute Joseph Chamberlain who, as Secretary of State for the Colonies held, as Lord Wellington had done in the 1840s, that giving a Constitution to Malta was the same as giving a Constitution to a man-of-war.[22] He was determined, therefore, that either the elected members work the existing constitution or that he would rescind it. In 1903 he chose the latter course.

The conflict created many difficulties for the public service, especially for its most senior officers. The "anti-riformisti" accusation, for example, that Heads of Departments were nothing less than the collaborators of a 'military despotism'[23] forced many of them to abandon their residences in Valletta and set up house, across Marsamxett Harbour, in Sliema. Sliema, today Malta's largest town, became the "English" town while Valletta retained its latin-Italianate character.[24] Furthermore, both sides in the struggle viewed the public service as some kind to a mercenary army which could be induced, for a reward, to abandon one general and join forces with his enemy. Thus, both sides sought to gain from the Colonial Office as many concessions for public servants as possible. Secretaries of State and Colonial Office officials repeatedly expressed despair at events in Malta,[25] but, fears that Governors in Malta might

lose face with the people, led them eventually to approve their demands or schemes.[26] Finally, the public itself was no less a target than public servants were. Schemes, such as the building of new hospitals, most of them involving large expenditure, were undertaken by the government in an effort to gain popular support from among the common people. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, for example, because of the great number of public works being undertaken, workers had to be brought over from Sicily and Spain as the normally over-abundant supply of Maltese labour proved insufficient.[27] It was a policy, however, which eventually brought Malta to the brink of bankruptcy.[28]

#### IMPLEMENTING JULYAN'S REPORT

A Colonial Office memorandum, written in 1882, records that Julyan's Report on the civil establishments of Malta arrived at the office on the 7th April 1879 and that 'the Chapters relating to the several departments were dealt with separately.'[29] Enclosed with this memo was a letter in which Julyan acquainted Sir Michael Hicks Beach, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 'with the impressions' that he had 'formed regarding the personnel of the Government as represented by its more prominent members.'[30] Its overall message was, that senior civil servants were, either 'unequal' to the demands that the reform programme would impose upon them, or 'unwilling' to give it loyal support.[31] It was only to Inglott, according to Julyan, 'the only head of Department who appeared to entertain any serious idea that reform of any kind was called for' and 'by far the fittest man to give effect to the proposed changes',[32] that London could look to with confidence for implementing its measures. It was not a situation calculated to inspire great hopes for the future and Colonial Office frustration with the prospect of reform in Malta was already clearly evident about three months after Julyan wrote his letter.[33]

This frustration arose principally over the question of who should be appointed to act as Director of Contracts. Julyan, as we have seen earlier,

had proposed the creation of a Contracts Committee. This Committee was to be responsible for all government contracts which concerned the leasing of crown property and the general or individual needs of departments. He had proposed as its chairman, William Hoare, the Auditor-General, of whose abilities, however, Julyan entertained a low opinion. It was a view which received confirmation over the next ten years or so as one case of fraud, or of misappropriation of funds, followed on the heels of another.[34] Neither was it lost on Colonial officials. One of them observed, for example, in June 1879, that while it was a 'question of principle whether the duties of Director of Contracts are consistent with those of Auditor-General', Mr Hoare was

'so little competent that it may be a question whether he should be charged with the initiative in so important a department of the Public Service.'[35]

It was decided, therefore, that Inglott, the office of Collector of Customs, should be appointed Auditor-General and Director of Contracts with Hoare taking over the new office of Receiver-General. This brought, however, a spirited reaction from Sir Arthur Borton, the Governor since 1878, who condemned the transfer as 'objectionable and unadvisable.'[36] He reminded Hicks Beach that the office of Auditor 'had always been reserved for Englishmen' and that it would be 'as inexpedient as it would be contrary to all precedent to place a native of Malta in that position.'[37] Nor was it right, said the Governor, that a Maltese should be appointed to an office which, after its reorganisation, would rank 'second only to that of Chief Secretary.'[38] For a time London held its position. Hoare, Hicks Beach wrote to Borton, must be held responsible for the defective working of the Auditor's office in Malta and, given

'the additional importance and responsibility which will be given to the Auditor-General by making him Director of Contracts',[39]

it was inconceivable that Mr Hoare should continue to hold that appointment. Borton, however, remained adamant. The fault for the accumulation of arrears in the Land Revenue and the Courts, he told Hicks

Beach, should not be attributed to the Auditor-General but to the Heads - both Maltese - of those establishments. Hoare had done 'what the Government demanded of him' by calling attention to these arrears in his annual reports and if no action had been taken this was

'from motives of humanity to a very poor population,...undue deference to public opinion (which is greatly opposed to such severity), as well, as to constant appeals from members of the elected bench in favour of defaulters.'[40]

What in the end, however, decided the Colonial Office to retain Hoare as Auditor and to appoint him Director of Contracts was not Borton's claims, but the fact that Inglott refused the offices. He also refused the office of Receiver-General, as the new Head of the Land Revenue was to be styled. Some years later Fairfield, at the Colonial Office, minuted that Inglott had 'behaved badly' towards them by refusing to take 'upon himself the brunt of carrying out Sir P. Julyan's recommendations.'[41] But, despite Hicks Beach's warning that 'in the future' he expected, from Hoare, a higher 'degree of activity and efficiency in the discharge of his duties',[42] no real improvement was attained. Five years later another Secretary of State complained, that the 'Auditor-General does not duly appreciate the importance of the duties devolving upon him'[43] and was relieved to hear that Hoare intended 'to retire at once' thus, saving him, the 'unavoidable' duty of taking disciplinary action against him.

Many of the fears expressed by Julyan, however, continued to reassert themselves over the next decade or so. Two cases in particular gave rise to debate and recrimination. The first concerned Mr Mamo, the Assistant Collector of Land Revenue. The Governor, praising his 'zeal, assiduity, and ability',[44] had recommended the latter for the office of Receiver-General. But, before the Colonial Office had time to consider his nomination, it was discovered that one of the senior clerks under Mamo had voluntarily confessed, on his sick-bed, to have misappropriated departmental funds.[45] The case roused the indignation of the Secretary of State. He refused to consider Mamo's nomination for promotion and severely

censured the Auditor-General who, it was discovered, that Hoare had failed to conduct an audit on the books of the clerk concerned.[46] The Governor continued, however, to see 'no reason to doubt' Mamo's integrity, but admitted that the latter 'had not the moral courage to exercise proper authority'.[47] He attributed this to the peculiar circumstances of a small community in which, Borton said, few possessed 'a sufficiently keen sense of public duty to override private friendships'.[48] It was decided, therefore, to appoint to the newly created office of Receiver-General, Sciortino, one of the senior clerks in the Chief Secretary's office whom Julyan had singled as deserving of promotion.[49]

The matter did not end there for, when in May 1880 Lord Kimberley replaced Hicks Beach at the Colonial Office, attempts were made by the elected members of Council to have the issue reopened. The Governor protested with the Secretary of State that the elected members had no right, constitutionally, to 'express an opinion, the subject matter belonging exclusively to the Executive,'[50] adding, however, that in a small place like Malta public questions were generally viewed 'through the medium of private and family interests.' Mamo had a very large family and Borton claimed that it was this fact, rather than the merits of the case, which had given rise to the memorial. Nonetheless, Borton said that he shared the elected members view that Mamo had been 'a victim of circumstances'[51] and expressed his readiness, at 'an early opportunity...of giving him a fair promotion.'[52] But Lord Kimberley remained firm. Mamo, he told the Governor, had been passed over because it was felt that Sciortino was more fit to fill the office of Receiver-General than the former would have been. Moreover, the elected members no right 'to volunteer their advice in the filling of a Government appointment', especially one which had not been 'officially made known'.[53]

The second case involved Monreal, the acting Controller of the Charitable Institutions. Both Rowsell and Julyan in their separate reports,

had called for a more efficient administration of this department. Rowsell thought that, what the department needed, was a firm hand on its management and had recommended that Inglott should be appointed its head. Julyan, because he preferred to see Inglott employed elsewhere and 'in the absence of a better man', recommended that Monreal, although 'not so able generally as one or two others',[54] but having experience of the work of the department, should be appointed its head. In confirming Monreal's appointment the Secretary of State expressed his view as to the reforms that were required in the sphere of poor relief. Although he envisaged great difficulties, he stressed that 'every endeavour'[55] was to be made to reduce the existing expenditure on charities. A new poor house had to be built, the number of Police physicians had to be reduced,[56] and a 'provident dispensary', which would do away with 'the pauperizing system of gratuitous medical attendance',[57] established. The Governor promised to attend to these instructions but, in the end, nothing was accomplished. Neither the poor house nor the dispensary project were, in fact, followed up, while the number of Police Physicians was not, because of the opposition of the elected members and the 'representations of the Governor', reduced.[58] But, worst of all, no real improvement was registered in the administration of the Charitable Institutions.

In September 1886, Simmons, who two years earlier had succeeded Borton as Governor, after surveying the performance of this department took the unprecedented step of forcing the Controller to retire at once from the service. Stanhope, Kimberley's successor at the Colonial Office, thought that 'it was a bad precedent' but, at the same time, an 'advantage to the public service to be rid'[59] of Monreal. But not everyone agreed. The elected members pressed the government to state whether Monreal had requested to retire freely or whether he had been forced to do so. They also pressed the government to place, on the Council table, the official correspondence which had taken place on the subject, something which the

government refused to do.[60] Others held up Monreal's forced retirement as yet another instance 'of the oppression and injustice of the local government'.[61] Colonial Office officials too thought that Monreal had been harshly treated. One of them minuted that, while Monreal was 'no doubt incompetent,...no one case against him appeared to amount to actual delinquency or neglect of duty'.[62] However, 'the worst of it' was, the official continued, that the Governor had failed to find this out earlier and in 1885 had actually increased Monreal's salary from £400 to £500. This, he concluded, had given Monreal a handle against the Governor and made it difficult for them to support the latter. But the Secretary of State was not prepared to weaken the authority of the Governor and although he refuted, in a confidential despatch, what he called the latter's exaggeration, he upheld the decision.[63]

These two cases were singular in that action was taken against inefficient Heads of Departments. But they also represented a two-fold pattern which was repeated in nearly every other department. First, reform everywhere proved difficult. Second, interference from the elected bench in questions of public service organization and discipline, once immune from such pressures, had become an important factor. Even the reform of the Land Revenue Department and the appointment of the Receiver-General had almost succumbed to the manoeuvres of the elected members. When Rowsell's suggestion that Crown property should either be sold or let on perpetual lease was made public, the elected members sought, and obtained, the creation of a select committee of Council to investigate the issue. It was part of an attempt to forestall changes for, after nearly two years, the Committee had not submitted its report.[64] London waited patiently but, in February 1880, the Governor was instructed to proceed on the lines indicated by Julyan - Rowsell's proposals having in the meantime been rejected by London - by separating the Land Revenue branch from the Public Works branch and to appoint, as we have seen, Sciortino as Receiver-General



and Head of the revenue branch.[65] It was also decided, after a good deal of soul-searching, to appoint Galizia, the senior architect in the works branch, as Head of the newly independent Public Works Department.[66] His headship, as Julyan predicted,[67] was not particularly successful and in 1888, when Galizia retired, the Governor sought to replace him by Mr Chadwick, an English engineer, who had been sent to Malta to assist the Government with the setting up of a Water Works Department. Although Chadwick's appointment was to be for five years only, Council members, not wishing to be seen preferring an outsider to a local candidate, rejected the proposal.[68]

In their individual reports Rowsell and Julyan had recommended the suppression of the Government Printing Office. Hicks Beach thoroughly agreed and Borton was instructed to implement the proposal. The Governor promised to do as instructed but, when pressed to act by the Colonial Office, he raised many of the objections which, forty years earlier, had been raised by Bouverie. The government, he argued, required a press of its own to print papers not intended for public circulation and for keeping the public informed about developments in the administration. It was unwise to make the government depend exclusively on printers and newspapers nearly all of which were hostile to it. London, however, continued to insist on its suppression but, as Anderson at the Colonial Office minuted in 1881, 'eventually nothing happened.'[69] The issue re-surfaced in the autumn of 1885 when Governor Simmons, while defending the continued existence of the Printing Office with the same arguments as his predecessor, sought permission to have the salaries of those employed in it raised.[70] At this stage, London simply gave in. 'I suppose' minuted Anderson, 'we must agree',[71] while Lord Stanley, at the time Colonial Secretary, was merely content to exhort the local government 'to keep the fixed establishments not in excess of what is actually required'.[72]

In the sphere of judicial reform, as already observed, opposition was

expected from Adrian Dingli, the Crown Advocate. On reading Julyan's Report one official in London minuted that 'Dingli will not like what Sir P. Julyan proposes', that he was 'averse to retrenchment' and that he was 'clever at making objections' which he 'expressed at a length which wearies out those who are in controversy with him.'[73] Like Julyan, this official thought, that reform in the legal establishments depended entirely on the fact that the President of the Courts, Sir Antonio Micallef, supported it.[74] But these hopes receded in September 1879 when Micallef, desirous to stand as a candidate at the next Council election, tendered his resignation.[75] Julyan warned that 'a grave error has been committed in not having had the reorganization of the Law Courts'[76] dealt with earlier. He wrote that,

'under the OLD President the proposed alterations would have been pretty sure to work well. Under the NEW ONE [namely Dingli] I would be greatly inspired if they be not improved out of existence.'

Julyan was in fact proved right. Minor reforms, such as those which extended the jurisdiction of the Syndics and City Magistrates Courts were implemented but other, more important reforms, notably in the Civil Courts, 'succumbed' as Anderson minuted in 1882, 'to the hostility of Sir A. Dingli'.[77]

Houlton's opposition to reform in his department was as determined as that of Dingli. Julyan had proposed that the preparation of the annual estimates, of the Blue Book and some other minor tasks should be transferred from the Chief Secretary's Office to those of the Auditor-General. Julyan hoped that this would lead to a reduction in the number of clerks serving directly under Houlton. But the latter was the epitome of the "maximizing bureaucrat" of modern day. He believed that any diminution of tasks and officers from his office represented a loss of influence and prestige[78] and, in the past, had stubbornly resisted similar measures.[79] Julyan's recommendations were, however, so trivial that Colonial Officials did not press them when it became clear that

Houlton was completely opposed to their implementation.[80] But, unknown to Houlton, the conviction was taking hold, in London, that the Chief Secretary in Malta had to be got rid of. The issue was first raised by Herbert, the Permanent Secretary at the Colonial Office, when the Office was discussing Julyan's views regarding Maltese demands for the appointment of a Civil Governor or, alternatively, of a Civil Administrator (Lieutenant Governor) to assist the Governor in civil matters. Julyan had concluded that neither were really necessary. What Malta required, in his view, were really competent Heads of Departments, capable of assisting and advising the General holding the office of Governor, in questions of civil administration. He thought that the creation of an Executive Council would help achieve this.[81]

Herbert agreed with the Commissioner that, with an efficient civil administrative staff to support him, 'a military Governor may conduct public affairs sufficiently well' but stressed that, without such support, he tended to be 'helpless to correct errors and initiate reforms.'[82] He did not object to 'continue the military Governor' but, since Julyan had demonstrated in his Report that Heads of Departments lacked the ability to provide this support, he would abolish the office of Chief Secretary and appoint, instead, 'a Civil Lieutenant Governor'. The latter would be required to preside at Council sittings and to conduct, under the direction of the Governor, the civil administration of the Island. Herbert believed that such an arrangement had four distinct advantages. On the positive side, 'if well carried out', he thought the measure had political advantages, for he expected that the appointment of a Lt Governor would 'be considered a substantial concession to Maltese feeling'.[83] He also envisaged that 'it would give increased efficiency' to the public service. On the negative side, the Permanent Secretary saw in this measure the means for getting rid of Houlton, an ardent opponent of reform, and a man lacking in 'administrative experience and other special qualifications', including

a 'thorough knowledge of...Italian'. He also felt that the risk of embarrassment for the Crown would be significantly reduced if the Governor's role of President of the Council of Government was taken over by the Lt Governor.

Hicks Beach concurred, but it was not until 1884 that the War Office consented to the appointment of Civil Lt Governor. Nevertheless, in March 1883, the Colonial Office managed to secure Houlton's resignation as Chief Secretary appointing, in his place, Hely-Hutchinson, a former Chief Secretary in the Barbados administration. The latter was appointed first as Chief Secretary and later, in 1884, as Lt Governor.[84] But, whereas Houlton had served in Malta for almost thirty years, his successors, including Hely-Hutchinson, were to hold their office from between six and fifteen years before being "promoted" elsewhere by the Colonial Office.[85]

Houlton also opposed the formal creation of an Executive Council. He held this measure to be 'neither desirable nor expedient in a fortress like Malta',[86] pointing out that 'a De facto Executive Council composed of the Governor, his first civil officer, [Chief Secretary] and his legal adviser [Crown Advocate]' had existed in Malta for nearly twenty years.[87] According to the Chief Secretary, informal but detailed discussions, regarding the business to be brought before the Council and the mode of proceeding therein, were held before each Council sitting. The Secretary of State did not agree. The institution of an Executive Council, he wrote, would 'be an advantage.'[88] The real question, as he saw it, was not whether this Council should be set-up, but who was to sit on it, for he doubted 'whether 6 members could be found', from among Heads of Departments, who were 'really qualified to serve.' One of his officials, Edward Wingfield, suggested that 'five members...will be sufficient at first.'[89] Borton held that five should be the maximum membership of the new Council and as he thought it desirable that it should be dominated by British officers, he suggested that the commander of the troops, the

Auditor-General, the Chief Secretary and the Governor, should be included in it. He was, therefore, not greatly excited with the suggestion that an elected member should be coopted to the Executive Council.[90] Some officials, however, thought that the commander of the troops should be excluded completely from this Council and his place be taken by Inglott, the Collector of Customs.[91] In the end it was decided to defer to the wishes of the Governor and fix the membership of the Executive Council at four with, in addition to the Governor, the commander of the troops, the Chief Secretary and the Crown Advocate as its members. But in 1883, two years after its inception, its membership was extended to seven with the inclusion of the Auditor-General, the Collector of Customs and the Director of Education.[92]

Julyan had raised, in a forceful manner, the question of private practice to which notaries, lawyers, doctors, and architects, employed in the public service, were entitled. These officers, the Commissioner had argued, must either be made to devote their whole time to their duties or, like other professionals in private life, be paid for the actual services performed by them on behalf of the government. This question came up for discussion in December 1880 when Governor Borton submitted, for the approval of London, a scheme for improving the salaries of Land Surveyor's employed with the P.W.D.[93] Borton proposed to raise their minimum salary from £70 to £100 and their maximum from £120 to £250 per annum. He claimed, however, that the proposed new rates of pay were not large enough to compensate them for the loss of private practice. Borton recommended, therefore, that they should be allowed to continue to enjoy this privilege adding, that this arrangement was more economically advantageous to the government. The Secretary of State replied that, if this was truly the case, he would not refuse to sanction the scheme. Nonetheless, he observed that it seemed 'probable that the Government surveyors, who had been content to earn...from the Government' much less than an able surveyor in

Malta would normally do, were not of 'that description'.[94] He, therefore, instructed him to reduce, as vacancies occurred, the number of surveyors employed in the public service.

There the matter rested until 1883 when sixteen notaries, with private practices in Valletta, presented the Governor with a draft Bill aimed at regulating their profession.[95] These notaries were particularly aggrieved by the unfair advantage which their colleagues in the profession apparently enjoyed by virtue of their employment in the Public Registry and the legal establishments of government, and their right to practice privately. They argued that the latter's access to privileged information was unethical and Section Six of the Bill which they proposed sought to make the office of notary incompatible with the holding of public office. The Governor noted that there were seventeen public servants who held warrants allowing them to act as notaries, of whom, two were in the habit of practicing privately during office hours at their place of work, another two had offices of their own in Valletta, while the rest had small practices which they carried out from their homes.[96] Borton opposed the Bill but suggested that those notaries who were very old should be pensioned, while those with large practices should be advised that their income from this source will be taken into consideration when their pension was calculated. He further advised that a rule should be laid down

'that in future no salaried employee of the Government, with certain specified exceptions, will...be allowed to practice privately as notary.'

Paradoxically enough the new Secretary of State, the Earl of Derby, thought the matter unimportant and advised the Governor to ignore the matter.[87] But ten years and two Governors later, the issue resurfaced again when the Government found it difficult to fill the vacant office of Director of the Public Registry as none of its notaries would accept the promotion if, as they feared, it resulted in the loss of private practice.[98] Governor Smyth held, however, that 'the exercise of private practice by superior officers of the Government'[99] tended towards

irregularities and deemed it 'unadvisable' that these should be allowed to continue with their practice without some sort of restriction. The Governor's view had the support of his Executive Council which ruled that 'a professional officer, not as yet debarred' from practicing privately would not, on promotion, be forbidden from continuing with it, but that his practice should be restricted to a list of clients approved by the Governor.[100]

How important for the government this issue had become can be gauged from a list of professional officers which the Governor had forwarded it to London in January 1894.[101] According to this list sixty-five members of the various professions were in government employment, all enjoying the privilege of private practice of their profession and having, at the same time, the right to receive a pension on retirement. Thus, what successive Governors had defended as an economical arrangement had, by 1894, become an intolerable financial burden on the government, especially in the period after Julyan, when calls for increases in salaries could no longer be ignored. The government thought, that one way out of its difficulty, was to make the public service less attractive to members of the professions by forbidding professional officers the privilege of private practice. This step was eventually taken in December 1894[102] but remained a dead letter until almost a year later when it was established that Heads of Departments were to request from their subordinates, every quarter, a written declaration 'that they have not contravened the rule forbidding private practice'.[103] The names of officers who were specially permitted 'to exercise any private practice in some profession or calling out of office hours', were also to be listed and forwarded to the Chief Secretary.

Finally, Julyan had proposed that the clerks should be amalgamated into one general establishment, that their number should, as vacancies occur, be reduced from ninety-five to sixty, and that the remaining sixty clerks be divided into four classes of fifteen each. Promotion from one

class to another was to be by seniority but subject to proven ability. Wingfield's judgement at the Colonial Office was that these proposals seemed much 'fairer and more likely to produce efficiency'[104] than the existing system. Hicks Beach agreed, writing to Borton that he was 'disposed to adopt the recommendations' although the scheme required, in his view, 'much care and forethought in its application.'[105] In Malta too, on this occasion, the reaction was a positive one. A united Council of Government, in itself a rare occurrence, had concluded that, 'this altered system should be made to come into play...on the 1st June'[106] 1880, instead of January 1881 as proposed by London and a commission, consisting entirely of public servants, was appointed to advise 'upon the best mode of putting into force' the classification proposed by Julyan.[107]

The Report presented by this local Commission was short, crisp and deliberately vague.[108] The Commission adopted the classification and salary structure which Julyan had proposed in his Report but, since the scheme was being implemented before the number of full-time clerks had been reduced and the extra clerks absorbed, it was necessary to make some modifications. Thus, it was proposed, that the existing sixteen extra clerks were to be included 'as supernumeraries in the classes to which their seniority, coupled with efficiency, would entitle them.'[109] This meant, in practice, that the number of clerks assigned to each class was not to be fifteen, as the Report seemed to suggest, but higher. According to this arrangement the First Class was to contain sixteen clerks, the Second Class eighteen clerks, the Third Class twenty-four clerks, and the Fourth Class eighteen clerks. Three copyists were to be placed on probation while another eight clerks were to be retired on a pension on account of their age. The Commission claimed that the distribution of individual clerks within the different classes had been effected on the basis of seniority coupled with efficiency. As evidence for its case the Commission used the example of four clerks which, it alleged, were entitled by



seniority to be included in the First Class, but as they did not possess 'the necessary qualifications', had been placed in the Second Class. The Commission, however, failed to specify the qualifications which these gentlemen lacked.

The feeling at the Colonial Office was that the Governor was right to bring the scheme before the Council of Government when he found that it was 'disposed to adopt'[110] it. But, as one official remarked, it was 'impossible to judge of the fairness of the whole scheme without a more exact knowledge of the individuals'[111] than the Office possessed. He rightly pointed out that, in his Report, Julyan had recommended seniority as the basis for classification not for the existing clerks, but for the future, when the supernumeraries had been absorbed. He advised, therefore, that the matter should be brought to Julyan's attention for his comments.

Julyan's reaction to the Report of the Commission was scathing. Julyan claimed that, on the basis of his knowledge of the individuals concerned, he did not find in the proposed classification 'that attainments and intelligence have counted for anything.'[112] Nor did it appear to him, from the proposed scheme, that the future prospects of the most inefficient were in any way to be inferior from those of the most efficient. Hence, the adoption of seniority as the basis for classification reflected, in his view, a 'want of moral courage' which, though comfortable for the proposers, tended to render nugatory the recommendations contained in his Report. He made it plain that he had never contemplated that seniority alone was to determine the class, or the position in the class, that each individual was to occupy. This, he argued, would only have the effect of raising the incapable to the level of the most efficient. Julyan then went on to demonstrate that, if one looked at the salaries of each clerk before classification, the system as proposed would become wholly untenable since many clerks who, on the basis of seniority would be placed in the Third Class would, on the basis of pay, be placed much higher. Was pay, he asked,

an indication of the relative merits of each individual? Julyan concluded that, either great injustice had been done in the past to the most senior of these clerks or that, in future, an injustice will be done to the public service by placing him in the highest position to which a clerk can attain.

Julyan proposed an alternative strategy. The first step, he wrote, was to retire on a pension from the service all the clerks who either from age or other circumstances, were unfit for their duties. Next, the government was to select the 63 men best calculated to render good service and to divide them into four classes of fifteen each, plus three probationers. The third step was to place those who may be left, in excess of establishments, on a supernumerary list, dividing them under two heads: effective and non-effective. The latter he would get rid of as opportunities presented themselves while the former he would classify by seniority, transferring them to the Fourth Class of the fixed establishment as vacancies occurred. There was, at the Colonial Office, unanimous agreement with the views expressed by Julyan. The Secretary of State informed Borton that he was doubtful whether a classification made on the basis of seniority could be consistent with either justice to the clerks or the requirements of the public interest. He, therefore, instructed him to follow the procedure proposed by Julyan.[113] Nevertheless, despite these instructions, the existing body of supernumerary clerks was retained. The elected members and Heads of Departments, both fearing the unpopularity that reductions would cause, refused to give sanction to the instructions from London but contented themselves with adopting the classification proposed by Julyan in his Report.

When proposing that Julyan should conduct the inquiry into the Maltese public service, one colonial official had expressed the belief that the benefits of the mission would greatly outweigh its costs.[114] In fact, its achievements proved hardly spectacular although one or two of the reforms, such as the division of civil servants in classes, were to prove enduring.

But, despite the insistence of London, several reforms were never implemented, while others only partially. Opposition to the reforms proposed by Julyan had come from nearly every sector of Maltese society, including the Government. This perhaps explains Borton's reticence to use the official majority to push through many of the measures which had been approved by London. 'These are matters' he wrote to the Earl of Derby in November 1883, 'of entirely local interest'[115] and since the elected members were opposed to them, the Governor hoped that the Secretary of State would not insist that they should be pressed through Council. Borton, however, was not prepared to grant the elected members similar consideration when it came to implementing Keenan's recommendations on education. 'The question of education' he had added almost immediately, 'is in a somewhat different position.' His view was, that 'the avowed policy' of opposition to anglicization by 'the "antiriformista" party', had to be firmly resisted and that whatever had 'been done in the direction of encouragement of the English language', had to be defended and maintained.

In practice little had as yet been done. In 1879 Hicks Beach had expressed general concurrence with the several recommendations made by Patrick Keenan with respect to educational reform in Malta. The Secretary of State thought that the first step that had to be taken was to appoint a Director of Education and to leave in his hands the general details of reform.[116] Furthermore, he felt that the opportunity had arrived when

'the great abilities and experience of Mr Savona should if possible be enlisted in the service of the Maltese community by the offer to him of the post of Director of Education.'[117]

Savona was at the time an elected member of Council and had been prominent in calling for reform of the bread tax and of the educational system of the Island.[118] It was his qualities as a reformer, however, 'rather than his attainments in scholarship'[119] that had led the Secretary of State to nominate him for the new office. But, as Savona was an active supporter of anglicization, some opposition was expected to his nomination from his

former colleagues on the elected bench. For this reason Hicks Beach suggested, to the Governor, that the offer to Savona should not be made until Council had created the post and voted its salary. Events proved him right. No sooner had Savona entered on his duties of Director of Education than the first outbreak of hostilities between Government and opposition over the language issue occurred. A new newspaper, "Diritto di Malta", was launched to campaign against Keenan's proposals and against those who not only 'forgot that they were Maltese'[120] but continually reminded them that they should be the 'slaves of England' sacrificing their all for 'this famous garrison and Royal Navy.' It was only a matter of time, therefore, before the language question came to dominate every aspect of Maltese social and political life.

#### THE IMPACT OF THE "LANGUAGE QUESTION"

In March 1880 Borton informed the Secretary of State that Dr Naudi, the spokesman in Council for the elected members, had proposed a resolution in which the latter had called upon the government to refrain 'directly or indirectly' from implementing any of the suggestions contained in Keenan's Report 'without the approbation of the Council.'[121] He also proposed that 'with a view to calming the apprehensions which...have been caused by the publication of that Report' his resolution was to have precedence over all others. 'To this Resolution' wrote Borton, 'I could not accede; its object was to deprive the Executive of a power which it legally possesses.' He further claimed that the "apprehensions" to which Naudi referred were confined to a few of the teachers and professors who feared the loss of their appointment unless they managed to learn English sufficiently well. The Governor's stand may be explained by the fact that Dr Naudi's son was, at the time, a pupil of the English Jesuits College at St Julians[122] and consequently stiff opposition to the reforms was not expected from him. But the Governor had not counted on the vigorous opposition that was to be mounted against the government from Fortunato Mizzi, the elected member for

Gozo and soon leader of the "antiriformisti".

Mizzi believed that the only way to defeat the government's anglicization policy was to make it appear despotic in the eyes of the people by forcing it to carry its measures with the votes of the official members. He also planned to bring discredit on the existing Council. Mizzi took the first step in the latter direction in 1882, when he engineered the election, to the Legislative Council, of two ridiculous persons, a pauper with a chronic nervous disorder and an illiterate organist.[123] Although this, by itself, had proved enough to shake the confidence of the government, the discovery that some public servants had openly canvassed for the election of these individuals, appeared to call for strong measures.[124] One civil servant was, as a result, dismissed by the Governor and others severely reprimanded.

Hemming, a junior clerk at the Colonial Office, thought the action of the Governor 'very injudicious',[125] noting that it was 'not by any means uncommon', in Britain, for public servants to take an active part in political elections. Herbert, the Permanent Secretary, did not agree. The dismissed officer's defence seemed to him 'an impudent one and an aggravation of his office',[126] and it was, in his view, 'absurd to suppose that he did not know he was not acting properly in supporting the candidature of a wretched imbecile pauper.' Hence, the Governor's action was correct and ought to be - as it was - upheld. But, what the event had demonstrated, according to the Governor, was that 'the numerous body of those who oppose the Government' included 'a large section of public servants who are averse to reform.'[127] In January 1884, Borton returned to the same theme, complaining of the

'evil effect which is produced on the discipline and morals of the public service by the fact, that the bulk of the public servants are entitled to the franchise, and thus possess the means of putting pressure on the elected members to take up the cause of any public servant who may have incurred the censure of his superiors.'[128]

In the elections that followed the election of the two questionable

persons, the government was left in no doubt as to the strong opposition that it faced over its language policy. Seven of the eight candidates elected to Council belonged to the "anti-riformista" group who, buoyed by their success, demanded that during Council sittings the official members should speak Italian and that all government bills should also be introduced in that language.[129] Borton had no doubt that, 'in the event of either of these demands being refused, a political crisis will supervene.'[130] The Colonial Office, nonetheless, was determined to uphold the educational policy of the local government. The inhabitants of the fortress of Malta, minuted Herbert, on which the interests and safety of the Empire depended to an unusual degree, had to be educated in English.[131] When the news of this decision reached the elected members the seven "anti-riformisti" resigned en masse, pledging to go on with their campaign, much of which was directed against Savona personally.[132]

In the meantime the local government and the Colonial Office sought to stall the opposition's campaign by trying to get Cabinet approval for the transfer of the Imperial Post Office branch in Malta to the local government, by a reduction in the contribution by Malta to the Governor's salary and by the appointment of a Lieut Governor.[133] It took, however, years of acrimonious debate between the Colonial Secretary and the Treasury and the War Office before the desired results were achieved.[134] In 1883 the unpopular Houlton was replaced by Hely-Hutchinson, first as Chief Secretary[135] and later, in 1884, as Lieut. Governor, responsible for civil matters. The of this new office was announced at the same time that the reduction in the contribution from Malta to the Governor's salary was announced.[136]

But the concession to which both Government and opposition earnestly looked for from London, was that of making Malta a centre for examinations for the Home and Indian Civil Service and for Commissions in the Army and Navy. The government's anglicization policy could only gain the approval of

the middle classes if the prospect of employment within these institutions could be truly brought within their reach. In other words, anglicization must be seen to have tangible rewards. On this point everyone was agreed. It was Savona who, in 1878, as an elected member, had first raised the issue of making Malta an examination centre .[137] Hicks Beach had supported the idea and had promised to provide the necessary funds if the Civil Service Commission adopted the proposal. His request was, however, rejected.[138] In 1880, after renewed pressure from Malta, the matter was taken up by Lord Kimberley, who strove to impress on the Commissioners the 'considerable importance' that he attached to this measure as it would help promote the study of English in Malta and to attach 'the Maltese to this country.'[139] This time the Civil Service Commissioners were more receptive but further progress over the issue was blocked by the Treasury. Treasury officials decided that, it was one thing to examine in Malta for a Maltese local service and quite another to localise examinations for the Home Civil Service.[140] The Governor was disappointed. He noted that, while the matter was still being negotiated, the elected members had given priority to education issues over all others and were ready to vote the necessary funds 'with the sole ultimate object'[141] of so raising the standard of education and English in particular

'as to enable them [Maltese youth] to successfully compete with others in competitive examinations...for services out of this Island, especially India...'[142]

Fairfield at the Colonial Office thought that it was highly important to prevent the Maltese 'from becoming sulky and throwing themselves into the arms of the Italia Irredenta party'.[143] But he was sure that the Treasury would merely 'scoff at such considerations.'

As the crisis in Malta deepened a great deal came to rest on the resolution of this question. For the local government, and for Savona personally, success in this venture would have served to vindicate the policy in favour of English over Italian. For some of the elected members

it would have made the difference between cooperation with the policy of the government or opposition to it. In October 1882, Cachia Zammit, one of the elected members intimated to the Secretary of State that 'the Imperial Government would gain by the adoption'[144] of this measure, for people liked practical benefits and 'get well affected in proportion as these benefits become recognised.' But the Treasury remained steadfast in its refusal especially as educated Indians were also clamouring to have the examinations for the Indian Civil Service conducted in India.[145] It was inconcievable that the Maltese would be allowed to compete in Malta for the Indian Service while the privilege of competing in India was denied to the natives of that colony.

In the June 1884 elections the seven "anti-riformisti" regained their Council. The methods which they employed, especially their cry that the government intended to protestanize the Maltese,[146] were denounced by the Governor. He also complained bitterly 'that a considerable proportion of the employes of Government' had voted for Mizzi and his colleagues. This, he thought, might somehow surprise the Secretary of State, so he pointed out

'that for many years past the public service, as a body, had looked to the elected members of Council to obtain for them increase of salary and amelioration of position. The elected members, who are not responsible for keeping the expenditure within the revenue, make such proposals with a light heart. The Government',

however, compelled to oppose such proposals finds itself

'held up to the public service as the obstacle to their welfare, whilst the elected members pose as the friends and supporters of the public servants against the parsimony' of the government.[147]

In that same year Borton was succeeded, as Governor, by Sir Lintorn Simmons who held Malta to be a fortress of vital strategic importance for British imperial.[148] He fully supported the language policy of his predecessor. 'There can be no doubt whatever', he wrote, 'that assigning to English the first position'[149] in schools was the best measure that the government could adopt in the interest of the great mass of the population.



He trusted, therefore, 'that no pressure will induce H.M.'s Government to yield one iota to the clamours that have been raised.' The agitation in Malta, he claimed, was partly the result of 'a thirst for employment under the local Government', among educated young men, 'which...cannot possibly be satisfied.' The latter, being 'very clever', directed their energies at exciting opposition to the Government in the hope that their persistence might in the end be

'rewarded by some of the best appointments in the gift of the Government over the heads of many who had toiled assiduously in the inferior ranks of the public service'.

Savona, the Director of Education, he thought a good example of this strategy. He was determined Simmons not to give in to this 'same game', nor to allow the elected members to obstruct or even challenge the government. His approach created some misgivings at the Colonial Office. 'I regret', minuted Herbert, 'that Sir Lintorn Simmons should appear to have too military a seat on this restive horse.' [150] Lord Derby, the Secretary of State, compared the Governor's language to that of military men in the House of Lords who seemed to hold that 'Malta should be regarded as always in a state of siege.' [151] At one point the Secretary of State was even constrained to 'deprecate' the high handed attitude employed by the Governor in the Council. [152]

But the Governor was to create other difficulties for the Colonial Office. Ignoring his own criticism of his predecessors' tendency to reward agitators, Simmons embarked on a plan which was clearly aimed at attracting to the government's side the vast army of public servants in its employ. This he intended to do by increasing salaries throughout the public service. The Governor took his cue from the decision of the Colonial Office to raise Hely-Hutchinson's salary from £1,000 to £1,600 per annum, in recognition of the increased responsibilities that his new office of Lt Governor entailed. [153] Simmons strongly argued that the large increase conceded to the Lt Governor had created jealousy and disappointment among

the 'higher Maltese'.[154] He proposed, therefore, to raise the salaries of all Heads of Departments and of Dingli, who was now President of the Courts.

Colonial Officials thought that the Governor had 'a strong' case.[155] Derby agreed, that 'the very great preponderance of the Lt. Governor's salary'[156] over those of Maltese heads, was likely to create discontent in the Maltese community. Others felt that the Governor had a point when he said that the higher Maltese could not, on account of their salaries, mix on equal terms with navy and army officers who, to a great extent dominated Maltese society.[157] But the Governor's attempt to compare the salaries of Maltese Heads of Departments with those of English officers in other colonies, they held to be fallacious. Anderson observed that 'Malta' was 'unique in having an indigeneous professional class'[158] and as this class was 'far too numerous for the wants of the population', professional incomes were very low and, as every one was eager for a government place, public service salaries were also low. 'Malta salaries' concluded Anderson, 'must be judged by Malta standards not by the standard of Gibraltar, Ceylon, or any other place.' He, therefore, advised against raising the salaries of these Heads further. Derby thought, however, that they 'must do what the Governor wants',[159] although he was not sure that the elected members would not block the proposal. He felt that it would 'be awkward for the Governor if the opposition' could 'pose as defending the taxpayer from the greed of the official members.'

The Governor knew that there was a real danger of this happening[160] so, in order to aggravate 'the great difficulty' in which the elected members would find themselves, he proposed salary increases to minor employees in the Customs, the Printing Office and other establishments.[161] The initial reaction in London was to resist the Governor's proposals. Wingfield warned that 'the expense of the Establishments of Malta is growing apace'.[162] Anderson advised total

rejection of the schemes as there was 'not a word in all these schemes of any reduction in the numbers of these employees.'[163] Stanley, who in the meantime had succeeded Derby as Secretary of State for the Colonies, found himself 'reluctant to sanction any further addition to the permanent liabilities of the Island.'[164] But, as one scheme followed on the heels of another, the Colonial Office found itself unable to oppose the Governor. Four days after his earlier minute Anderson merely minuted that he supposed that they 'must agree to allow this [scheme] to stand.'[165] Stanley concurred but, in extending his approval, he appealed to Simmons to keep before him the need 'to practice economy'. [166] Nevertheless, concerned at the apparent spiralling cost of the civil establishments, Stanley called for an internal Colonial Office memorandum on the expenditure of Malta since the time of Julyan's Commission.

The memorandum showed that between 1879 and 1884, during Borton's administration, the cost of establishments had risen by a little over £4,500 overall. Of this sum, however, £2,000 represented the addition to the cost of the educational establishments arising out of Keenan's suggestions for an improved teaching staff at the University and in the primary schools.[167] But the memo also demonstrated that, in the year since Simmons appointment as Governor, the cost of establishments had increased by a further £5,000. This was, in itself, a large jump and Anderson's earlier warning that Simmons was 'going on a great deal too fast', [168] was fully justified.

In 1886, however, as a result of renewed agitation in Malta such issues seemed to lose their urgency. Mizzi and his colleagues had once again brought ridicule on the existing Council of Government by securing the election of "ridiculous persons", one of whom was said to be of ill-repute.[169] In London one official saw this as 'the last nail in the coffin' of electoral politics in Malta,[170] which he dismissed as 'a farce'. Heads of Departments were unanimous against giving in to the

elected members while Savona advocated a return to gubernatorial government.[171] The Governor favoured neither a return to absolute government nor the grant of greater powers to the elected members.[172] For Anderson 'the only question' seemed to be how far Britain was to concede to the Maltese their popular demands without in any way endangering British interests in Malta as a fortress and coaling station.[173] Some effort had to be extended in order to retain the loyalty of the Maltese, especially since the Franco-Russian-Turkish alignment seemed to pose an important threat to British strategic interests in the Mediterranean and beyond.[174]

Various schemes of reform were, therefore, considered by the Colonial Office. One of these schemes was the brainchild of Gerald Strickland, a young Cambridge graduate of Maltese and British aristocratic lineage, and of Fortunato Mizzi. It was moderate in tone and, while it sought to give elected representatives on the Council of Government a majority, it admitted the necessity of allowing the Governor a veto and the Crown the prerogative of legislating by Order-in-Council. Furthermore, it precluded the proposed Council from legislating on matters of imperial interest.[175] Colonial officials found the plan very much to their liking. It provided them with an opportunity to do away with the official majority whose members, according to Herbert, could not learn the 'rules of this game,'[176] i.e., that the official majority was not to be resorted to in matters of a secondary and local importance and lived 'under a mistaken fear of any defeat in Council.' At the same time the new scheme aimed to leave untouched all the powers which the Crown had always possessed in the colony.

The new Constitution was promulgated by Letters Patent dated 12 December 1887. A Council of Government consisting of six official members and fourteen elected members was established. The grant or refusal of public money as proposed by the Governor was to be determined by the votes of the elected members present. The Governor was also to select, from the

elected bench, three members to sit as salaried unofficial members in the Executive Council.[177] Not everyone in Malta agreed that the new Constitution had satisfied their claims for autonomy but, at the first Council sitting held under the new Constitution, Mizzi described it as the 'first substantial step towards that just limit of autonomy which is the desire of all.'[178] Three months later he was to be found once again defending the Constitution of 1887 against the attacks of its opponents. As the person who had in the past led the opposition to the government, Mizzi said, it was only just that he should now state that 'our demands have been finally heard'. Many exaggerations had been written but, he reminded critics, that 'perfection in human affairs can never be achieved.'[179] Mizzi, Strickland and Grech Mifsud had been appointed by the Governor, following their performance in the March 1888 elections, to the Executive Council and to this extent, one must accept Mizzi's view as the most reliable.[180] As a member of both Councils he was in a better position than most to comment on how the Constitution was working.

It was Mr Mizzi himself who, in 1888, in the Council of Government, proposed the appointment of a select committee to report on the clerical establishment.[181] The reason he gave for his resolution was that the time had arrived for an enquiry to examine whether the classification of clerks, adopted in 1880, and the salaries connected with it, merited some reform. He also wished the select committee to examine which departments required supernumeraries and writers; whether it was possible to place those so engaged on the clerical establishment; and to see whether the conditions under which these supernumeraries and writers had been employed could be improved. Mizzi also gave notice of his intention to bring forward, at a later date, other resolutions for the appointment of similar committees to inquire into the conditions of other public employees.

The Select Committee, which included Mizzi himself, two other elected members, and the Collector of Customs, and the Comptroller of Charitable

Institutions,[182] presented its Report in 1890.[183] The Report claimed that the classification of clerks as proposed by Julyan had failed to effect any improvement or produce any saving to the local exchequer.[184] It was stated that one result of the Julyan scheme was that nine supernumerary clerks and twenty seven writers had been kept in the service. This was a twisting of the facts. At the time that Julyan reported, the office of writer had not been introduced in Malta. Rowsell had in fact deprecated this fact and had strongly urged its adoption.[185] It is clear, however, that the local government had adopted Rowsell's proposal because it suited its purposes. It allowed it to employ educated young men as clerks, who would otherwise have remained unemployed, without disturbing the classification sanctioned by the Colonial Office and without the necessity of seeking the approval of the Secretary of State.[186] Thus, whereas Julyan had, in 1879, proposed a clerical establishment of sixty-three full-time clerks, i.e. a reduction of 22 clerks on the existing establishment, since his Report the number of clerks in full-time or temporary full-time employment had risen from 85 to 114 clerks.[187]

The Select Committee Report also concluded that promotion from one class to another on the basis of seniority, a system which was also attributed to Julyan, had failed to increase efficiency. While 'Penrose Julyan evidently aimed at preventing sorry possibility of promotion by favouritism', the Report stated, promotion by seniority had not proved 'a sufficient incentive to the zeal of government clerks.' The

'certainty...of not being passed over by abler men, and...the impossibility of overtaking, through personal ability those who are less efficient',

were, in the view of the Committee, 'the two most serious defects in the existing classification.' [188] Consequently,

'the clerical establishment...does not open up a career likely to secure the services of the best intelligence in the country, much less a career in which promotion is made to depend on ability.'

Julyan, as we have seen earlier, did not recommend that seniority should be the sole criteria for promotion. On the contrary the Commissioner

had insisted that none but the most suitable should be promoted, and that 'the rigour of selection should be increased for each higher grade.'[189] However, everything else being more or less equal, seniority should be the yardstick for promotion. Hence, if after 1880 promotion from one class to another had been granted entirely on the basis of seniority then the fault rested with the local government and not with Julyan. In all probability the government had resorted to this system because it provided some defence against the certainty of accusations, in Council and in the press, of favouritism or nepotism. Malta being a very small community accusations of this sort are employed with great effect but not easily rebutted.

Having thus stated its position the Select Committee then proceeded to make its case in favour of a reform in the existing classification of the clerical establishment and of the writers. Echoing the Northcote-Trevelyan Report of 1854, the Committee stated that in every department two kinds of work was required of clerks and writers, that is, work requiring the exercise of intelligence and entailing responsibility, and mere copying.[190] To perform the latter work the Committee recommended that a class of writers, distinct from clerks, was to be formally constituted. Recruitment to, and promotion from, this class was to be by competitive examination, which was to consist of a small number of subjects, while the maximum age for candidates was raised to 35. Of the existing number of writers eighteen only were to be retained in this class, the remainder to be promoted to the grade of clerk. The clerical establishment was no longer to be divided into four classes of fifteen clerks each but in three classes (see below), consisting of a different number of clerks.

PROPOSED NEW CLASSIFICATION				
CLASS	NO. CLERKS	STARTING SALARY	ANNUAL INCREMENT	MAXIMUM SALARY
3rd	26	£60	£5	£100
2nd	52	£110	£5	£180
1st	18	£220	£10	£250

The Third Class, the lowest on the clerical establishment, was now to consist of 26 clerks. Recruitment to this class was to be by competition between candidates aged 28 or less and new entrants were to be considered as on probation for the next three years. While on probation they were to receive a salary of £60 per year but from the fourth year onwards they were to receive an annual increment of £5 until they reached the maximum of their class, i.e. £100 per annum. Promotion to the Second Class was to be by seniority, unless undeserving, and to take place when vacancies occurred but, at least, after ten years service in the Third Class.

The Second Class was to consist of 52 clerks, an increase of 37 on the previous classification. As with the Third Class promotion from the Second to First Class was to take place when vacancies occurred, but after not less than fourteen years service and by competitive examination. The government, however, was not to be bound to appoint the first placed candidate in the examination but one of the first three. The starting salary for this class was to be £110 per annum rising by annual increments of £5 to a maximum of £180. The Collector of Customs and the Comptroller of Charitable institutions, the two official members on the Select Committee, dissented from the idea that promotion to the First Class should be by examination. They argued that a mark of scholarship was not in itself a mark of efficiency and it might turn out that the most efficient and deserving clerks might repeatedly miss promotion on this score. This requirement, therefore, was in their view liable to defeat the Committee's



own insistence that only the most efficient should be allowed to advance to the higher offices.[191]

The First Class was to consist of only 18 clerks with a minimum salary of £220 rising by an annual increment of £10 to £250 per annum. Registrars of the Courts were no longer to be on the clerical establishment but those appointed to these offices were to be graduates in law and were to receive a salary of £300. Promotion from the First Class to departmental Headships was not to be considered as of right. The Committee proposed that five of the clerks in this class should be appointed as Assistant Heads of Department (receiving £50 more). It was stressed, however, that the government should not bind itself to choose Heads of Departments from among these First Class clerks but, if necessary, from among outsiders and clerks of the lower classes. This notwithstanding, the Committee felt that the existing practice of selecting from among the clerks in the First Class was both 'praiseworthy and commendable' and advised 'that it would be well not to depart from it save for exceptional reasons.'[192]

The Select Committee reserved its final comments to questions of discipline and other general matters. No public officer was to be allowed to practice a profession privately, even out of office hours. Heads of Departments were to report every irregularity committed by clerks under their charge and each Head was to sign a declaration, every year, stating that he had done so. Overtime was to be compulsory and an attendance book was to be kept. In order that clerks may have a wider knowledge of the administration, periodical transfer of officers was recommended. With respect to the qualifications expected from would-be candidates for the civil service, knowledge of book-keeping was to be obligatory. Finally, as it was desirable that the number of graduates in the civil service should be augmented, the Report proposed that graduate examinees should be awarded a bonus mark.

The Select Committee Report may be said to present some interesting

insights. It seemed, for example, that all sides were agreed, that the public service was and would remain, the focal point of Maltese life. Hence, the insistence on securing for it 'the best intelligence in the country.' But the Committee was divided on whether intelligence, or academic achievement, and efficiency presupposed each other. The view that they somehow did was strongly contested by the official members on the Committee, who happened to be in a minority. There is good reason to believe that public servants feared that if academic achievement was to become the sole yardstick for entry and promotion, then many of them would inevitably suffer. This, perhaps, explains why the Committee agreed, apparently by way of compromise, to the unusual provision, that the government should not be bound to appoint the first placed in the examination, but one of the first three. In return the professional groups, represented on the Committee by the elected members, who were all lawyers, gained control over the most important offices in the law courts, Registrars being required to be law graduates, while other graduates were to enjoy special advantages in civil service examinations.

In forwarding the Report to London, new Governor Smyth, made a strong defence for its recommendations.[193] Governor Simmons, he said, had given repeated assurances 'for improving the position of these Government servants'. Rejection of the proposed scheme, he feared, would be interpreted by everyone as a breach of faith by the government and would be used by its opponents as another excuse to attack it. Nevertheless, Smyth admitted, that the new classification, if adopted, would lead to a large increase to the fixed establishment of the colony and ultimately to the pension list. Colonial officials were not overly enthusiastic to accommodate the Governor. They were annoyed that Simmons's "assurances" had never been reported to the Secretary of State nor that a Select Committee had been appointed to examine the classification of clerks. The increase in expenditure which the Report of this Committee envisaged was also thought

to be a "large order".[194] Wingfield argued that he found it difficult to believe that a reclassification was thought necessary after only ten years, but feared that, at the base, of it was a contest between government and elected members for control over 'this harmful body of voters.'[195] He advised, therefore, that before the Report is approved the Governor should be instructed to examine closely the Heads of Department and to report back on whether he was personally convinced by the results of his enquiry of its necessity. He did not expect these Heads to easily admit that the new classification was not particularly necessary, or to admit of reductions in the existing number of clerks and writers, but their statements would give the Governor the opportunity 'to sift their reasons'. Finally, he advised that, even if the new scheme seemed to be justified, the Secretary of State should not sanction the new financial burdens which it entailed unless 'adequate provision' had been made for increasing the revenue by a revision of the tariffs and duties in operation in Malta.

With respect to the recommendations proper, opinion was varied. Mr Round thought the Report 'very sound';[196] Herbert, the Permanent Secretary, thought it "doctrinaire" in its views, though ably drawn up.[197] The latter also agreed 'very much' with the opposition of the official members on the Committee to the proposed examination for promotion to the First Class. Wingfield added that 'such a proposal is not likely to be entertained anywhere out of China'. He advised against its approval and suggested that promotion would be better left in the hands of the Governor. The proposed extension of the maximum limit of age for candidates for clerkships from 25 to 28 and in the case of writers to 35, he thought 'unwise' and 'more so' with respect to the latter. But, he did not consider this an important point and suggested that it should be left for local decision, the Secretary of State, however, expressing his doubts to the Governor as to its expediency. The same, he thought, applied to the proposal to give candidates who were University graduates a preference in

the examinations for clerkships. The recommendation that five First Class clerks should receive 'an additional £50 per annum a piece as assistants to certain Heads of Departments' he considered a reasonable proposal but he did not wish to see a rule laid down which would 'in anyway fetter the Government in the selection of Heads of Departments.' Lord Knutsford, since 1887 Secretary of State for the Colonies, concurred with these views and instructed that they should be embodied in a despatch to Malta.

Progress on the Report was, however, stalled by events in Malta. Mizzi was trying to revive his flagging political fortunes by working for responsible government. In 1890, for example, he demanded that the three elected members of Council who also held seats on the Executive Council should be appointed political heads of departments of the local government.[198]

But a more serious obstacle to reform arose from a different direction. All the elected members of Council had, in their electoral campaign promised to oppose the imposition of new taxation. Since the Colonial Office had made final approval of the scheme dependent on a revision of the Customs tariffs and other duties, the elected members were bound to reject it. They accused the government, especially the new Chief Secretary, Count Gerald Strickland,[199] that it had brought the two issues together in order to force the members to betray their pledge to oppose all new taxation.[200] They further claimed that this showed that the government was not sincere when it stated that it also supported the revision of the classification of clerks.[201] The Governor, probably on the advice of Strickland,[202] decided to counter-act these accusations by taking the unprecedented step of publishing, without permission, the Secretary's of State despatch on the subject.[203] This, he argued, forestalled elected members of Council from 'making political capital of this question and claiming to be the sole protectors of the interests of Government employees.' A month later, on the 9th February 1891, he again

defended his actions. 'it would', he warned Knutsford

'be detrimental to the discipline of the Public Service if this contention was not shown to be without foundation.'[204]

In April 1891, in opposition to the proposed revision of the Customs tariffs all the elected members of Council resigned their seat and the Council had to be dissolved.

But, while the matter of reclassification was waiting for a new election and the reconstitution of the Council of Government, which alone could vote the necessary funds, the government resolved to reintroduce the practice of nomination before competition in the recruitment of clerks. The Governor had first raised the matter in his letter of February 1891 when he had expressed his desire to add a further recommendation [to those of the Select Committee Report] to the effect that, in future, before competing

'for posts in the Civil Service, candidates should obtain a nomination to be given by the Governor after having ascertained that they are physically and otherwise fit for the service.'[205]

Putly, a junior clerk at the Colonial Office, thought that the Governor 'merely' wanted to satisfy himself of a candidate's physical and moral fitness before he was allowed to compete and did not intend to 'limit the competition'. [206] The more experienced Wingfield, however, who still held that nomination before competition 'ought to be the rule', [207] expressed his doubts. He thought it wise to ask the Governor for an explanation. The Governor replied, that as education in Malta was given almost gratuitously, many who were not socially and morally qualified to hold responsible offices in the public service, obtained such offices as a result of unrestricted competition. On this point, the Governor said, even his senior advisers agreed, for they attributed the existing difficulties and deficiencies of the civil service to the admission, through open competition, of 'young men belonging to families of the lower order.' [208] Sir Carbone, Dingli's successor as Crown Advocate said, for example, that open competition did not attract to the service 'the services of gentlemen, and hence of loyal and reliable public servants.' [209]

London did not find the explanation satisfactory. One official observed that while 'in principle' he believed 'in a wide and liberal nomination system'[210] what the governor was proposing went 'beyond securing merely moral and physical fitness.' How would it be worked in Malta and how would it be regarded by the Maltese he asked? Wingfield felt certain that when it was discovered, as it must be, that the service in Malta was being restricted to "gentlemen" it 'could not fail to cause great discontent among a people' used to open and unrestricted competition. Hemming opposed open competition on grounds that it had 'had a very bad effect on the Civil Service' in Britain and was, therefore, 'likely to have much worse effects in a place like Malta.' Yet, both in London and in Malta, everyone seemed to have lost sight of the fact that anglicization, as a policy, had been justified on the premise that knowledge of English would not only lift the labouring poor from their present state of ignorance, but that it would open up for them new employment opportunities in Malta and abroad. Nomination, therefore, as justified by the Governor, appeared to be a clear betrayal of the promises that had been repeatedly made to the ordinary Maltese.

The issue served to focus Colonial Office attention on the activities of the Chief Secretary in Malta. Gerald Strickland was appointed Chief Secretary in March 1889 after Hely-Hutchinson, until then Lt Governor, was appointed Governor of the Windward Islands.[211] In taking up his appointment, like Savona and many others before him, Strickland had departed from his publicly stated position that 'elected members should not accept government appointment.' [212] But he desperately wanted the office and Lord Knutsford felt that, as Strickland was half Maltese and an aristocrat, his appointment would be seen as a concession to the loyalty of the Maltese towards Britain.[213] Strickland, however, was proving to be too influential and the Governor seemed to be following his lead in everything.[214] Indeed, the Governor was also seen as being too weak with

respect to other higher civil servants.[215] Hence, behind the Governor's appeal for the re-introduction of nomination before competition, colonial officials beheld the hand of Strickland. One official observed, for example, that nomination would, in theory, place the patronage in the hands of the Governor but that, in reality, it 'would probably rest with the Chief Secretary.'[216] He questioned, however, whether Strickland will 'be likely, with the best intentions, to exercise such patronage wisely.' Another minuted that in exercising the right of nomination the Governor must be to a great extent guided by the Chief Secretary - and as 'long as a Maltese [Strickland] holds that office - a belief in favouritism may be expected to prevail.'[217] Hence, Colonial Office officials suspected that nomination was intended merely as a cover, not for attracting the best candidates that could be got, but for employing friends of Strickland and of other senior officials, and for punishing opponents of the government by withholding from them the opportunity of competing. The Colonial Office decided, therefore, to hold out against the Governor's wishes for as long as possible but, in autumn 1891, they finally gave in. Nomination before competition once again became the norm in Malta and was to remain so until 1945.[218]

The change did not escape Savona's attention who, in 1887, had resigned the Directorship of Education. As leader of the opposition, (Mizzi having retired from the Council), he was Strickland's principal opponent. At a public meeting in Valletta Savona, citing names, described how certain elected members of Council had been rewarded with offices for supporting the government. Then he quoted the Government Notice respecting candidates for the civil service. 'The scope of these new regulations', he alleged, was

'to bar the educated sons of the low from joining the Civil Service, and as Count Strickland looks with an evil eye on those who oppose the Government, the sons of those who side with the latter will be taken on in future.'[219]

After 1895, following Savona's retirement from politics and Fortunato

Mizzi's return to the field,[220] the latter made similar accusations against Strickland. In 1901, when proposing a resolution of Council for the removal of Strickland from the office of Chief Secretary, Mizzi claimed that the former had turned patronage - he called it corruption - into a system: 'Whoever serves the Government shall be rewarded by the Government.'[221] There was some truth in these allegations, but it is difficult, at this distance, and without the benefit of private papers, to judge how extensive patronage in appointments had become. In a small community such as that of Malta with its necessarily miniscule middle class it is not unusual for one to find that many of those involved in the political milieu are connected by family or marriage and, despite holding different views they tend to get along together fairly easily. This has always been the case in Malta and remains so today.[223] There was, however, an other factor. While it was and remains common practice for opponents of the government to deprecate the employment of non-Maltese citizens in the public service, it was also generally the rule that when a Maltese acquired a position of influence in his country he, not infrequently, became the object of some of the most vile attacks imaginable. Hence, the campaigns against Dingli (1854-1881), Savona (1880-1887) and Strickland (1889-1902).[224]

Whatever the reason or the cause, this pattern of conflict between the permanent members of government and the permanent members of the opposition continued. The question of improving the salary of the clerks through a new classification of the clerical establishment had remained unresolved. In July 1893 the Governor once again took up the matter with London. He informed the Marquis of Ripon, newly installed at the Colonial Office that 'the condition of affairs bears heavily on the Civil Service...[and] there is a growing danger of overwhelming difficulty in maintaining the necessary regularity and discipline in the service, with the present grievances of inadequate pay.'[225]

As the elected members, however, remained opposed to a revision of the Customs tariff it was useless to look to the Council for progress. The



Governor therefore proposed, on the insistence of Strickland, to announce that the profits from the sale of electric current will be placed in a special fund for this purpose. But London vetoed the idea. It was, they said 'eminently unsatisfactory'. [226] The increase of salary, it had been decided, was fair and

'this being so it should be put on exactly the same footing as the original salaries...and not made to depend upon a separate and purely artificial fund.'

The Council, it was admitted, was 'difficult to manage' but none thought that such a roundabout policy as the Governor proposed was either 'necessary or desirable.'

Fortunately, in 1894, a decline in the influence of Savona made the other elected members more willing to cooperate with the government. Many measures, involving public works and the improvement of the administration, were passed. [227] It also became possible for the government to carry the changes extending the customs tariffs upon which implementation of the new classification had, since 1890, rested. Thus, the expenditure necessary for carrying out the latter was, in September 1894, submitted for the approval of Council along with the rest of the Estimates for 1895. [228] The scheme, which became operative in January of the latter year, differed only marginally from that devised by the Select Committee of Council in their Report of 1889. Indeed, the only departure from the Report was that in future examinations, after nomination, for situations in the Civil Service were to be held for Writerships while vacancies in the clerical establishment were to be filled by competitive examination, also after nomination, among the writers. [229]

#### THE DEMISE OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

As the nineteenth century and Queen Victoria's reign edged steadily towards their close, so did the crisis in Malta gear up to its climax. The Constitution of 1887, because it placed the two essential powers of government - administration and financial supply - in the hands of two

different authorities, the former in the hands of the Governor and his senior civil officers and the latter in the hands of the elected members of Council, had proved unworkable. Such a constitution presupposed that the two authorities had similar, if not identical, goals and that disagreements can always be resolved in a spirit of mutual concession. It also assumed that both parties accepted their constitutionally assigned roles, the former as policy-maker and the latter as guardians of the public purse, and that neither side would seek to usurp or obstruct the other side in the exercise of its constitutionally sanctioned powers. Hence, the Constitution assumed willingness on both sides to maintain the status quo.

The elected members never accepted this feature of the Constitution but sought a transition to responsible government and very often seemed to think that obstruction and intransigence would eventually lead to its concession. If past evidence was anything to go by, then the logic underpinning the elected members' strategy of opposition to the government could not be faulted, but, the timing was to prove these strategies wrong. In 1895, competition - economic and/or military - with Britain from Germany, France, the United States, Russia and Italy had grown sevenfold. Britain, it was said, was in "splendid isolation" which in practice, meant that it had few friends.[230] 'There has been for some time past,' Joseph Chamberlain said in that year, 'a combined assault by the nations of the world'[231] upon British supremacy. If not checked, he warned, this assault would eventually jeopardise the very existence of the British people. As early as 1888 he had expressed his belief that, in facing up to these challenges, Britain must look to its colonies.[232] But this meant, in the first instance, Britain maintaining initiative and authority in these colonies in its own hands. Thus, Chamberlain had not only opposed Home-rule for Ireland but had exchanged his membership of the Liberal Party, which had proposed it, for that of the Conservative Party, which opposed it.

In June 1895 Chamberlain was appointed Secretary of State for the

Colonies in Salisbury's third ministry. In December of the same year he instructed the Governor in Malta to inform those agitating for responsible government that, as Britain held Malta as a fortress, and it being an indispensable one for the protection of imperial interests in the Mediterranean, agitation would force HM's Government to consider 'a revision of the constitution in the opposite sense.' [233] Nonetheless, agitation continued and after 1896 became more intense when a series of measures by the government, intended to advance the process of anglicization in education and in judicial proceedings, were implemented. [234] Their effect was to revive the language question and provoke the return of Mizzi to the Council of Government at the head of the "anti-riformisti" or "Partito Nazionale" as they were generally known by this time. [235] A new policy of obstructionism got under way and several legislative and financial bills were rejected by the elected majority. Chamberlain's response was to have these measures promulgated by Orders-in-Council. [236] Hence, as intransigence on one side gave rise to, or was met by, intransigence on the other, the crisis deepened. Neither Mizzi's visit to London in the summer of 1899 nor Chamberlain's visit to Malta in November 1900 served in any way to bring the two sides any closer. [237]

While newspapers favourable to the opposition and Mizzi's own paper laid siege to the government outside the Council chamber, the elected members did much the same inside it. Some newspapers repeatedly claimed that

'as soon as the English language should be installed as the official language...all the posts, [in the civil service] big and small, shall be occupied by Englishmen'

for whom the climate in Malta was 'delicious'. [238] As evidence they pointed to a number of British 'faces' in the local police force and to the 'augmenting salaries' in the public service, which they alleged was necessary to attract candidates from Britain. The intention behind these

attacks was clear. The "nazionalisti" hoped to undermine the loyalty of civil servants to the government by impressing upon them the belief that anglicization would undermine their future prospects of advancement. It does not seem to have succeeded on the same scale as before. Nomination appears to have given the Maltese civil service, as Strickland seems to have anticipated, what the creation of the closed higher division of clerks had given to the British civil service, i.e.

'that sort of free masonry which exists between people who have had a certain grade of education'

and 'whose associations and ideas'[239] belonged to that class with whom they will have to deal. In the case of Malta it was affinity with the feelings, aspirations, language and values of the colonial power, rather than class, which was at the heart of the nomination system. No doubt, this affinity would have been greatly enhanced had Maltese willingness for a closer association with the British been reciprocated locally. The governor complained, for example, that both he and the Admiral had done their 'best to get some of the leading Maltese elected' to an English Club in Valletta, but

'young officers in the Army and Navy invariably prevented it, which was a very great pity, as it was a grievance greatly felt by Maltese in high positions in the island.'[240]

This notwithstanding, there were, apart from appointments and promotions, other rewards for those who supported the government, including commissions in the local militia.[241] Furthermore, a secure career in the public service remained the most stable option for young men with an education. Until its abolition, in 1897, the Senate of the University, in its annual reports on education in Malta, frequently complained of 'the serious drawback' to the University,

'arising from the Civil Service Examination, which was attended by a good number of University students, being held at or about the same time as those'[242]

of the University. At the same time the Reports acknowledged that it was nearly impossible to stop the trend and suggested that it would be in the

interest of both the University and the Civil Service

'were the Competitive Examinations held periodically every two years, in September, after a two years' Course and Examinations in Arts and Sciences',[243]

at the University of Malta. Hence, very few outside the Faculty of Law thought it worthwhile to jeopardize the chances of a future career in the public service by openly sticking their flag to the mast of the "nazionalisti".

Mizzi and his colleagues vented their frustrations with attacks against Strickland whom they held responsible for what they called this system of 'bribery' and 'corruption'. [244] The local government was very sensitive to the tone of these attacks and sought, by the use of all its financial and legal powers, to crush the opposition. In April 1899, partly in response to the case of Edward Holden who, in 1892, attempted to procure plans of forts and gun batteries in Gibraltar and Malta, [245] and partly to curb disclosures of information to the press, an Official Secrets Act was promulgated in Malta. The Bill prohibited 'the communication or publication of official documents or facts' by public servants making it an offence punishable by imprisonment for one year or the payment of a fine. [246] In that same year the Governor made an attempt to interfere with the freedom of the non-English press, but was restrained by Chamberlain. [247] At the same time he intimated to the Secretary of State that it was expedient that, in the case of Malta, 'Colonial Regulations forbidding government officials taking an active part in editing or contributing to newspapers', should be relaxed. He also sought permission to spend, over the next three years, £900 in payments to newspapers loyal to the government which were willing to publish articles counteracting 'the evil influence of the disloyal section of the press.' [248] Chamberlain replied that, although many of the articles in the local press were 'extremely offensive', he felt that, unless the disloyalty of the press increased considerably, it was 'neither necessary nor desirable for the Government to take any special

notice of it.'[249] He also expressed considerable doubt as 'to the expediency of allowing civil servants to write for the press.' If permission was granted to a group of public officers friendly to the government, Chamberlain felt that it would be rather difficult to withhold it from others less disposed to the government. 'Colonial Regulation No. 79', ought not, he concluded, 'be relaxed unless very strong grounds can be given for doing so.'

The truth was that the time was not long in coming when London was to abandon this rule as well and to allow public servants to write articles in the press attacking the opposition.[250] But before it did, the government found it convenient, in 1901, to ban the holding in public of political meetings within the precincts of Valletta, Floriana, and the Three Cities on the ground that these form an integral part, because of their fortifications and armed services establishments, of the fortress.[251]

In 1901 the crisis could no longer be forestalled. In February of that year the government brought before the Council a Public Revenue Improvement Ordinance which would allow it to spend over £600,000 in public works, some of which were necessary for the welfare of the population, such as drainage, hospitals and so on, and others which some held were only for the use of the military, such as wider and better roads.[252] As this programme, however, involved the imposition of new indirect taxes, the opposition was enabled to strike at the government in a way that surpassed all expectations. Public meetings were held in the villages and outside the gates of Valletta to protest against these taxes.[253] At these meetings cries of "Malta belongs to the Maltese" were frequently raised[254] and invective against the British military authorities was constantly employed.[255] Chamberlain, Strickland and other public officers were verbally attacked while the Mizzi press found no difficulty in siding with the Boers against Britain.[256] The Bishop too joined in the fray, (the clergy having already done so), refusing the Governor's advice to separate

questions of religion from political issues during Church services.[257] Tension continued to rise and a police report observed that serious outrages against the Chief Secretary's own person were probable.[258] The Head of Printing also reported that the perpetration of 'rash acts against Responsible Officers'[259] were being spoken of, while the Crown Advocate felt that plans were in hand to assassinate Strickland and thought it fit to advise the latter, who had gone to England for consultation, not to return to Malta until things had become somewhat clearer.[260] The Governor complained that in Valletta the entire population was hostile to the government.[261]

London felt that this state of affairs could no longer be tolerated. In 1902 it was decided to move Strickland out of Malta and after several attempts secured for him the Governorship of the Leeward Islands.[262] Colonial Officials had reached the conclusion that nothing further could be gained by leaving Strickland in Malta.[263] He had been made the target of some of the most savage attacks in the press and he was accused of schemes, such as the forced migration of Maltese to other countries, which had entirely no foundation but which an illiterate population was quick to believe. Two months after Strickland's departure, Chamberlain proceeded to carry out the threat he had made in December 1895 and the Constitution of 1887 was first suspended and then revoked.[264] Rather than moving forward Malta, had regressed to the situation in which it was to be found in 1849.

The events of the last two decades of the nineteenth century demonstrated that, in a micro-state or colony, political conflict tends to have an adverse impact on the public service. As we saw above, not only many of the proposed reforms were defeated but that, by and large, the only acceptable policy was that which helped maintain the status quo. Support for new policies, such as anglicization, depended entirely on the ability of the government to reward its supporters. This was the policy pursued by Strickland. To this extent, there was no principle involved and this

explains why each side in the conflict viewed the public service as a mercenary army ready to march under the command of the highest bidder for its services. This, as we saw too, took its toll on discipline within the service and it was not unusual for Governor's to complain of their inability to impose their will on their subordinates. We shall see in the next Chapter that much the same pattern was to apply, with the difference, however, that civil servants were to seek to organize the forces better through the medium of trade unions.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. In 1875 some of the subject peoples of Eastern Europe rose against their Turkish colonisers. By 1877 Russia and Turkey were at war and at the Treaty of San Stefano (March 1878), Turkey made several concessions to Russia. Britain was furious at the extent of these concessions and decided to challenge the Treaty. To show that Britain meant business, Disraeli called up the Reserve and stationed several thousand Indian troops in Malta. War seemed inevitable, but it was avoided thanks to the success of the Congress of Berlin (1878) and three British secret treaties with Russia, Turkey and Austro-Hungary. At this time Britain obtained Cyprus from Turkey. See O. Richard & J.W. Hunt, (1965), (2nd ed), Longmans, London, pp.196-201.
3. M. Hyder, "Implementation: The evolutionary model" in D. Lewis & H. Wallace, (eds), (1984), Policies into Practice, Heinemann Educational Books, London, pp.1-18.
4. C. Pollitt, L. Lewis, J. Negro and J. Patten, (eds), (1979), Hodder and Stoughton, Kent, UK, p.139.
5. See Colonial Office Mins., "Results of Missions of Mr Rowsell, Sir Julyan and Sir P. Keenan", 21 Jul. 1882-23 Jul. 1882, C.O.158/261, PRO, Kew, London.
6. Julyan to Kimberley, 17 Jul. 1880, C.O.158/257, PRO, Kew, London.
7. See Chapter Nine.
8. Borton to Kimberley, 20 May 1880, C.O.158/256, PRO, Kew, London.
9. Past experience had prepared them to expect opposition and a warning to this effect was also made by Julyan in a private letter to Hicks Beach. Julyan to Hicks Beach, 7 Apr. 1879, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
10. Herbert min. of 24 Aug. 1879, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
11. Hicks Beach to Borton, 17 Dec. 1879, Confid., C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.



12. F.W. Rowsell, "Malta", in *Nineteenth Century*, IV, Aug. 1878.
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17. Correspondence Relating to the Question of Making Malta a Centre for Civil Service, Naval and Military Examinations, (1884), C-4187, HMSO, London, pp.2-3.
18. H. Frendo, (1979), *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony, The Maltese Experience*, Midsea Books, Valletta, p.31.
19. Anderson min. of 11 Jul. 1883, C.O.158/264, PRO, Kew, London.
20. Simmons to Stanhope, 29 Oct. 1886, C.O.158/278; and Simmons to Stanhope, 20 Dec. 1886, with mins., C.O.158/279, PRO, Kew, London.
21. See Colonial Office mins. "Constitution of Malta", 19 Jan. 1887, C.O.158/285; and Holland to Simmons, 14 Dec. 1887, C.O.158/285, PRO, Kew, London.
22. Hansard, 3rd Series, 1902, Ci.II, 88, quoted in H. Frendo, (1979), *Party Politics in a Fortress Island*, Midsea Books, Valletta, p.5.
23. Encl. in Borton to Derby, 6 Mar. 1883, in Correspondence on the Subject of Alterations in the Constitution of Malta, (1883), C-3524, HMSO, London.
24. Even though the street names of Valletta have changed several times you can still hear people refer to 'Strada' (Italian for Street), Repubblica, 'Strada' Merkanti, and so on. In Sliema they are merely streets, roads or avenues.
25. See, for example, Colonial Office mins. on Simmons to Stanley, 21 Oct. 1885, C.O.158/274, PRO, Kew, London.
26. See Stanley to Simmons, 7 Nov. 1885, C.O.158/274, PRO, Kew, London.
27. A.V. Laferla, op.cit., Vol.II, p.164.
28. Rundle to Harcourt, 7 Jun. 1911, C.O.158/371, PRO, Kew, London.
29. Colonial Office Memo, "Results of Missions...", op.cit., C.O.158/261, PRO, Kew, London.
30. Julyan to Hicks Beach, 7 Apr. 1879, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
31. Ibid.
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33. Colonial Office mins., Director of Contracts, Jun. 1879, C.O.158/255,

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34. Colonial Office mins., "Director of Contracts", 23 Jun. 1879, C.O.158/255; Borton to Hicks Beach, 8 Jan. 1880; 31 Jan. 1880; 9 Feb. 1880; Hicks Beach to Borton, 9 Mar. 1880; Borton to Kimberley, 10 May 1880, all at C.O.158/256; Borton to Kimberley, 19 Jan. 1881; Kimberley minute 10 Jun. 1881, both at C.O.158/259; and Simmons to Derby, 27 Jan. 1885; C.O.158/272; and Simmons to Stanley, 17 Dec. 1885, C.O.158/275, PRO, Kew, London.

35. Fairfield min. of 23 Jun. 1879, Director of Contracts, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.

36. Borton to Hicks Beach, Confid., 6 Nov. 1879, C.O.158/253, PRO, Kew, London.

37. The offices of Governor, Chief Secretary and Auditor-General had been reserved to British civil servants on the recommendation of Commissioners Austin and Lewis in 1838. Until 1859 the office of Head of Police was also reserved for a British officer but in that year Hector Zimelli, a Maltese was appointed. This practice continued until 1889 when, on the insistence of London, an English officer was reappointed. See Knutsford to Torrens, 4 Feb. 1889, C.O.158/290, PRO, Kew, London.

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43. Derby to Simmons, 9 Mar. 1885, C.O.158/272, PRO, Kew, London.

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47. Borton to Hicks Beach, 9 Feb. 1880, C.O.158/256, PRO, Kew, London.

48. Ibid.

49. Hicks Beach to Borton, 16 Feb. 1880, Confid., C.O.158/253, PRO, Kew, London.

50. Borton to Kimberley, 5 May 1880, C.O.158/256, PRO, Kew, London.

51. Ibid.

52. Borton to Kimberley, 10 May 1880, C.O.158/256, PRO, Kew, London.

53. Colonial Office mins., "Appmt. of Mr Sciortino as Receiver-General", 13 May-17 May 1880, C.O.158/256, PRO, Kew, London. Sciortino's appointment

had been conveyed to the Governor in a confidential despatch dated 16 Feb. 1880. The appointment was not to come into effect until 1 Jun. 1880.

54. Julyan to Hicks Beach, 7 Apr. 1879, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
55. Hicks Beach to Borton, 27 Sept. 1879, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
56. Colonial Office mins., "Results of Missions...", op.cit., C.O.158/261, PRO, Kew, London.
57. Hicks Beach to Borton, 27 Sept. 1879, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
58. Colonial Office mins., "Results of Missions...", op.cit., C.O.158/261, PRO, Kew, London.
59. Stanhope min. of 22 Sept. 1886, C.O.158/278, PRO, Kew, London.
60. Debates of the Council of Government, Sitting 59, 11 Nov. 1886, Session 1886-87, Vol.IX.
61. Colonial Office mins., "Monreal's Case", 13 Jul. 1887, on Simmons to Holland, 9 May 1887, C.O.158/281, PRO, Kew, London.
62. Ibid.
63. Holland to Simmons, 29 Jul. 1887, Confid., C.O.158/281, PRO, Kew, London.
64. Colonial Office mins., "Results of Missions...", op.cit., C.O.158/261, PRO, Kew, London.
65. Hicks Beach to Borton, 16 Feb. 1880, C.O.158/253, PRO, Kew, London.
66. Ibid.
67. Julyan to Hicks Beach, 7 Apr. 1879, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
68. Simmons to Knutsford, 5 Apr. 1888, C.O.158/286, PRO, Kew, London.
69. Colonial Office mins., "Results of Missions...", op.cit., C.O.158/261, PRO, Kew, London.
70. Simmons to Stanley, 21 Oct. 1885, C.O.158/274, PRO, Kew, London.
71. Anderson min. on above.
72. Stanley to Simmons, 7 Nov. 1885, C.O.158/274, PRO, Kew, London.
73. Colonial Office mins., "Legal Establishments", 7 Jul. 1879, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
74. Julyan to Hicks Beach, 7 Apr. 1879, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
75. Borton to Kimberley, Confid., 23 Oct. 1880, C.O.158/257, PRO, Kew, London.
76. Julyan to Kimberley, 17 Jul. 1880, C.O.158/257, PRO, Kew, London.
77. Colonial Office mins., "Results of Missions...", op.cit., C.O.158/261, PRO, Kew, London.

78. Le Marchant to Lytton, 10 Sept. 1858, C.O.158/185, PRO, Kew, London.
79. Ibid., and Chapter Eight.
80. Colonial Office mins., "Results of Missions...", op.cit., C.O.158/261, PRO, Kew, London.
81. See Chapter Nine.
82. Colonial Office mins. "Governor's Establishment", 12 Sept. 1879, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
83. Ibid.
84. Derby to Borton, 28 Mar. 1883, C.O.158/264 and Malta Government Gazette, 27 Apr. 1883, p.62.
85. Hely-Hutchinson was appointed Governor of the Windward Islands in 1889. He was replaced in Malta by Gerald Strickland in November of the same year. Strickland was also moved out of Malta in 1903 when he was appointed Governor of the Leeward Islands.
86. Houlton to Hicks Beach, 27 Sept. 1879, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
87. Ibid.
88. Hicks Beach min., "The Governor's Establishment", 14 Sept. 1879, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
89. Wingfield min. of 10 Mar. 1880, C.O.158/257, PRO, Kew, London.
90. Borton to Hicks Beach, 27 Nov. 1879, Despatches to Sec. of State, Vol.3, Palace Archives, Valletta.
91. Wingfield min. of 10 Mar. 1880 on Borton to Hicks Beach, 28 Feb. 1880, C.O.158/256, PRO, Kew, London.
92. Letters Patent, 24 May 1881, in Malta Government Gazette, 20 Jun. 1881, and Derby to Borton, 8 Mar. 1883, in Correspondence on the Subject of Alterations in the Constitution of Malta, (1883), C-3524, London, HMSO, pp.10-11.
93. Borton to Kimberley, 29 Dec. 1880, C.O.158/258, PRO, Kew, London.
94. Kimberley to Borton, 15 Jan. 1881, C.O.158/259, PRO, Kew, London.
95. Encls. in Borton to Derby, 1 Sept. 1883, C.O.158/265, PRO, Kew, London.
96. Ibid.
97. Derby to Borton, 15 Sept. 1883, C.O.158/265, PRO, Kew, London.
98. Smyth to Ripon, 10, Nov. 1893, C.O.158/306, PRO, Kew, London.
99. Smyth to Ripon, 22 Dec. 1893, C.O.158/306, PRO, Kew, London.
100. Knowles (OAG) to Ripon, 9 Jan. 1894 encls. min. by Executive Council

- recorded at its 12 May 1893 Sitting, C.O.158/308, PRO, Kew, London.
101. Encls. No.2 in Knowles to Ripon, 9 Jan. 1894, as above.
102. Govt. Circular, 31 Dec. 1894, C.O.158/311, PRO, Kew, London.
103. Govt. Circular, 4 Sept. 1895, C.O.158/342, PRO, Kew, London.
104. Wingfield min. of 8 Sept. 1879, "Establishments", C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
105. Hicks Beach to Borton, 27 Sept. 1879, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
106. Borton to Kimberley, 20 May 1880, C.O.158/256, PRO, Kew, London.
107. Ibid.
108. Encls. No.1 in Borton to Kimberley, as above.
109. Ibid.
110. Colonial Office mins., "Scheme for Amalgamation of the Clerical Staff", C.O.158/256, PRO, Kew, London.
111. Ibid.
112. Julyan to Herbert, 19 Jul. 1880, as above.
113. Kimberley to Borton, 30 Jul. 1880, C.O.158/256, PRO, Kew, London.
114. Meade min. on Straubenzee to Carnarvon, 29 Jan. 1876, C.O.158/244, PRO, Kew, London.
115. Borton to Derby, 23 Nov. 1883, in Further Correspondence Respecting the Constitution and Administration of Malta, (1884), Eyre and Spottiswoode, C-3948, p.5.
116. Colonial Office mins., "Results of Mission...", op.cit., C.O.158/261, PRO, Kew, London.
117. Hicks Beach to Borton, 16 Feb. 1880, C.O.158/255, PRO, Kew, London.
118. Bayley Potter who had brought the matter of the "Bread Tax" before the Commons in 1877, had been in correspondence with Savona over the issue. Savona had also proposed a motion in Council calling for the abolition of that tax but his elected colleagues opposed it. See Correspondence Respecting the Taxation and Expenditure of Malta, (1878), C-2032, HMSO, London, Appendix Y, p.51.
119. Hicks Beach to Borton, 16 Feb. 1880. C.O.158/253, PRO, Kew, London.
120. Diritto di Malta, 1 Jul. 1880, Issue No.1.
121. Borton to Hicks Beach, 18 Mar. 1880, C.O.158/256, PRO, Kew, London.
122. A.V. Laferla, op.cit., Vol.II, p.34.
123. H.I. Lee, (1972), Malta 1813-1914: A Study in Constitutional and Strategic Development, Progress Press, Valletta, p.187.

124. Borton to Kimberley, 22 Nov. 1882, C.O.158/263, PRO, Kew, London.
125. Colonial Office mins., "Dismissal of Dr Grech", 9 Dec. 1882, C.O.158/263, PRO, Kew, London.
126. Herbert min. of 9 Dec. 1882, as above.
127. Borton to Derby, 21 Oct. 1883, C.O.158/265, PRO, Kew, London.
128. Borton to Derby, 17 Jan 1884, C.O.158/267, PRO, Kew, London.
129. Borton to Derby, 29 Nov. 1883, in Further Correspondence Respecting the Constitution and Administration of Malta (1884), Eyre and Spittiwoode, C-3948, London, pp.11-13.
130. Ibid.
131. Herbert min. on Borton to Derby, 21 Dec. 1883, C.O.158/266, PRO, Kew, London.
132. Borton to Derby, 8 Dec. 1883, Further Correspondence...(1884), op.cit., p.33.
133. With respect to the transfer of the Imperial Post Office in Malta to the Maltese government see, Mins. on Treasury to Sec. of State, 13 Jan. 1880, C.O.158/258; Borton to Kimberley, 5 Dec. 1881, C.O.158/260; Kimberley to Treasury, 11 Feb. 1882, C.O.158/260; and Treasury to Sec. of State, 25 May 1883, C.O.158/263, all at PRO, Kew. As to the question of the Governor's salary see Herbert min. of 16 Mar. 1882, "Governor's Salary", C.O.158/263; and Colonial Office Memo, "Results of Missions of Mr Rowsell, Sir Julyan and Sir P. Keenan", 21 Jul.-23 Jul. 1882, C.O.158/261, and Derby to Borton, 15 Apr. 1884, C.O.158/268, all at PRO, Kew, London.
134. See C.O. mins. on Treasury to Sec. of State, 13 Jan. 1880, C.O.158/258, and Treasury to Secretary, 16 Mar. 1882, C.O.158/263, PRO, Kew, London.
135. Derby to Borton, 28 Mar. 1883, C.O.158/264, PRO, Kew, London.
136. Derby to Borton, 15 Apr. 1884, in Further Correspondence Respecting the Constitution and Administration of Malta, (1884), C-4165, Eyre and Spottiwoode, London.
137. Straubenzee to Hicks Beach, 4 May 1878, in Correspondence Relating to Question of Making Malta a Centre for Civil Service, Naval, and Military Examinations, (1884), C-4187, London.
138. Mann to Hicks Beach, 3 Aug. 1878, as above.
139. Kimberley to Civil Service Commission, 25 Oct. 1880, as above.
140. Civil Service Commission to Sec. of State,, 5 Apr. 1881, as above.
141. Borton to Kimberley, 30 Apr. 1881, C.O.158/259, PRO, Kew, London.
142. Ibid.
143. Fairfield min. of 7 May 1881, C.O.158/259, PRO, Kew, London.
144. Cachia Zammit to Kimberley, in Correspondence on the Subject of

Alterations in the Constitution of Malta, (1883), C-3524, Eyre and Spottiwoode, London, p.6.

145. For a full discussion of this issue see Correspondence Relating to Question of Making Malta a Centre for Civil Service, Naval and Military Expenditure, (1884), C-4187, HMSO, London.

146. Borton to Derby, 7 Jun. 1884, in Further Correspondence...(1884), op.cit., C-4165, p.20.

147. Ibid.

148. H.I. Lee, (1972), Malta 1813-1914, A Study in Constitutional and Strategic Development, Progress Press, Valletta, p.194.

149. Simmons to Derby, 30 Aug. 1884, C.O.158/269, PRO, Kew, London.

150. Herbert min. on Simmons to Derby, 25 Nov. 1884, C.O.158/270, PRO, Kew, London.

151. Min. by Derby, 18 Dec. 1884, on Simmons to Derby, 10 Dec. 1884, C.O.158/270, PRO, Kew, London.

152. Derby to Simmons, 22 Dec. 1884, C.O.158/270, PRO, Kew, London.

153. Simmons to Derby, 30 Aug. 1884, C.O.158/270, PRO, Kew, London.

154. Simmons to Derby, 22 Nov. 1884, C.O.158/270, PRO, Kew, London.

155. Colonial Office Mins. on above.

156. Derby min., 18 Dec. 1884, as above.

157. Anderson min. of 8 Dec. 1884, as above.

158. Ibid.

159. Ibid.

160. Simmons to Derby, 2 Apr. 1885, C.O.158/273, PRO, Kew, London.

161. Simmons to Stanley, 21 Oct. 1885, C.O.158/274, PRO, Kew, London.

162. Wingfield min. of 28 Oct. 1885, on above.

163. Anderson min. of 3 Nov. 1885, as above.

164. Stanley min. of 3 Nov. 1885, as above.

165. Anderson min. of 7 Nov. 1885, as above.

166. Stanley to Simmons, 7 Nov. 1885, as above.

167. Colonial Office Memo, Expenditure of Malta since Sir P. Julyan's Report, 21 Nov. 1885, C.O.158/275, PRO, Kew, London.

168. Anderson min. on Simmons to Stanley, 26 Oct. 1885, C.O.158/274, PRO, Kew, London.

169. Davis (OAG) to Stanhope, 20 Sept. 1886, Confid., C.O.158/278, PRO,

Kew, London.

170. Hemming on Davis (OAG) to Stanhope, 27 Sept. 1887, C.O.158/278, PRO, Kew, London.

171. Simmons to Stanhope, 4 Nov. 1886, C.O.158/278, PRO, Kew, London.

172. Simmons to Stanhope, 20 Dec. 1886, C.O.158/279, PRO, Kew, London.

173. Quoted in H. Frendo, (1979), op.cit., p.48.

174. H.I. Lee, op.cit., p.166.

175. Encls. in Simmons to Holland, 18 Aug. 1887, C.O.884/4, PRO, Kew, London.

176. Herbert min. quoted in H.L. Hall, (1937), The Colonial Office: A History, Longmans, Green & Co, London, p. 248.

177. Malta Letters Patent of 12 Dec. 1887.

178. Debates of the Legislative Council, Sitting 1, 21 Mar. 1888, in Vol.X, Sitting 1 to 17, Mar.-Jun. 1888, National Library, Valletta.

179. Debates of the Legislative Council, op.cit., Sitting 17, 26 Jun. 1888, Col.464.

180. It appears that many of Mizzi's former friends disagreed with him as to the political progress made by the Maltese with the grant of the 1887 Constitution. In 1888 the Governor reported that he had to dissuade Mizzi from resigning his seat in Council, the latter claiming lack of trust on the part of his colleagues. Simmons to Knutsford, 11 Jun. 1888, C.O.158/287, PRO, Kew, London.

181. Sitting No.7, 2 May 1888, Debates of the Legislative Council, Malta Govt. Press, Col.170-182.

182. Ibid.

183. Smyth to Knutsford, 17 Nov. 1890, C.O.158/294, PRO, Kew, London.

184. Report of the Select Committee Appointed by the Council of Government at the Sitting of 2 May 1888, C.O.158/294, PRO, Kew, London.

185. See Chapter Nine.

186. Colonial Office mins., "Report of Select Committee", with Smyth to Knutsford, 17 Nov. 1890, C.O.158/294, PRO, Kew, London.

187. Ibid.

188. Report of the Select Committee, op.cit.

189. P.G. Julyan, p.27.

190. H.R.G. Greaves, (1947), The Civil Service in the Changing State, Harrap & Co, London, p.21.

191. Additional Note attached to Report of the Select Committee Appointed by the Council of Government at the Sitting of 2 May 1888, encl. in Smyth



- to Knutsford, 17 Nov. 1890, C.O.158/294, PRO, Kew, London.
192. Report of the Select Committee, op.cit.
193. Smyth to Knutsford, 17 Nov. 1890, C.O.158/294, PRO, Kew, London.
194. Colonial Office mins., "Report of Select Committee", C.O.158/294, PRO, Kew, London.
195. Wingfield min. 13 Dec. 1890, as above.
196. Round min. 2 Dec. 1890, as above.
197. Herbert min. 9 Dec. 1890, as above.
198. H.I. Lee, op.cit., p.209.
199. Gerald Strickland was appointed Chief Secretary on 1 Nov. 1889.
200. Savona's motion in Council, encls. in Smyth to Knutsford, 5 Dec. 1890, C.O.158/295, PRO, Kew, London.
201. Ibid.
202. Colonial Office mins. on Smyth to Knutsford, 10 Jan. 1891, C.O.158/296, PRO, Kew, London.
203. Smyth to Knutsford, 10 Jan. 1891, C.O.158/296, PRO, Kew, London.
204. Smyth to Knutsford, 9 Feb. 1891, C.O.158/296, PRO, Kew, London.
205. Ibid.
206. Putly min. of 14 Feb. 1891, on above.
207. Wingfield min. of 14 Feb. 1891, as above.
208. Smyth to Knutsford, 17 Feb. 1891, C.O.158/296, PRO, Kew, London.
209. Carbone to Smyth, 12 Feb. 1891, in Smyth to Knutsford, 17 Feb. 1891, as above.
210. Colonial Office mins., "Admission to Civil Service", on Smyth to Knutsford, as above.
211. A.V. Laferla, op.cit., Vol.II, p.89.
212. H. Smith and A. Koster, (1986) Lord Strickland, Servant of the Crown, Progress Press, Valletta, Vol.II, p.56.
213. Knutsford to Torrens, 20 Sept. 1889, C.O.158/291, PRO, Kew, London.
214. Colonial Office mins., "Admission to Civil Service", on Smyth to Knutsford, 17 Feb. 1891, C.O.158/256, PRO, Kew, London.
215. Colonial Office mins. on Smyth to Knutsford, 17 Feb. 1891, C.O.158/296, PRO, Kew, London.
216. Colonial Office mins., "Admission to Civil Service", on Smyth to Knutsford, 17 Feb. 1891, C.O.158/296, PRO, Kew, London.

217. Ibid.

218. Knutsford to Smyth, 10 Nov. 1891, C.O.158/298, PRO, Kew, London.

219. Police Report of Savona Meeting (held 27 Dec. 1891), 28 Dec. 1891, in Smyth to Knustford, 4 Jan. 1892, C.O.158/299, PRO, Kew, London.

220. H. Frendo, *op.cit.*, p.87.

221. Mizzi speech in Council (translation) enclosed with Grenfell to Chamberlain, 16 Dec. 1901, C.O.158/338, PRO, Kew, London.

222. In Malta today two prominent Maltese families have elected members of Parliament representing opposing political parties.

223. Dates denote years during which these individuals held important offices.

224. Smyth to Ripon, 8 Jul. 1893, C.O.158/305, PRO, Kew, London.

225. Colonial Office mins. "Re: Increase of Salary to Clerks of Civil Establishments and Charitable Institutions", 15-17 Jul. 1893, C.O.158/305, PRO, Kew, London.

226. Lee, *op.cit.*, p.215.

227. Strickland to Sciortino, 24 Sept. 1894, C.O.158/311, PRO, Kew, London.

228. Chief Secretary to Heads of Departments, 31 Dec. 1894, C.O.158/311, PRO, Kew, London.

229. B. Porter, (2nd ed), (1984), *The Lion's Share: A short History of British Imperialism 1850-1983*, Longmans, London, p.124.

230. J.A.S. Grenville, (1964), *Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy*, Athlone Press, London, p.169.

231. W.L. Langer, (1935), *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902*, Harvard University Press, 2 Vols., p.77.

232. Chamberlain to Fremantle, 11 Dec. 1895, C.O.158/313, PRO, Kew, London.

233. A.V. Laferla, *op.cit.*, Vol.II, p.132 and p.136.

234. H. Frendo, *op.cit.*, p.23.

235. Grenfell to Chamberlain, 30 Jan. 1899, C.O.158/328, PRO, Kew, London.

236. A.V. Laferla, *op.cit.*, Vol.II, p.145 and p.150.

237. Grenfell to Chamberlain, 18 Mar. 1901, encls. translations of articles in Maltese (Italian language) press, C.O.158/335; and Grenfell to Chamberlain, 16 May 1901, encls. in Maltese, leaflet sent to parents of children attending public schools, C.O.158/336, PRO, Kew, London.

238. J. Harvey and K. Hood, (1958), *The British State*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, p.191.

239. *Memoirs of Field-Marshal Lord Grenfell* (undated), Hodder & Stoughton,

London, p.159.

240. Public Opinion, 16 Jan. 1890, in OAG to Knutsford, 20 Jan. 1890, C.O.158/293, PRO, Kew, London.

241. The Vice-Chancellor's Annual Report to the Senate of the University, 1894-95, Govt. Printing Press, p.1 para.2 and p.9 para.6; see also Report for 1895-6.

242. Ibid.

243. Grenfell to Chamberlain, 16 Dec. 1901, C.O.158/338, PRO, Kew, London.

244. See Note 221.

245. Ordinance No.VI of 1899, Malta Government Gazette, No.4125, 8 May 1899, C.O.162/33, PRO, Kew, London.

246. Grenfell to Chamberlain, 14 Dec. 1899, C.O.158/330, PRO, Kew, London.

247. Ibid.

248. Chamberlain to Grenfell, 12 Feb. 1900, C.O.158/330, PRO, Kew, London.

249. Grenfell to Chamberlain, 16 May 1902, C.O.158/342, and Chamberlain to Grenfell, 18 Jun. 1902, C.O.158/342, PRO, Kew, London.

250. H. Frendo, op.cit., p.119.

251. Debates of the Council of Government, Sitting 17, 13 Feb. 1901, Malta Govt. Press, Valletta, Vol.XXV, Cols.637-9.

252. H. Frendo, op.cit., p.119.

253. Encls.7, No.13, Med 883/5-52.

254. H. Frendo, op.cit., p.119.

255. Encls. "Malta", 8 Oct. 1901, Med 883/5-51.

256. Grenfell to Chamberlain, 20 Aug. 1901, C.O.158/336, PRO, Kew, London.

257. Police Force of 14 Aug. 1901, quoted in H. Smith & A. Koster, op.cit., p.173.

258. Ibid., p.178.

259. Ibid., p.178.

260. Grenfell to Chamberlain, 14 Oct. 1901, Med 883/5-51.

261. H. Smith & A. Koster, op.cit., p.216.

262. Ibid., pp.190-192.

263. A.V. Laferla, op.cit., pp.164-5.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### THE IMPACT OF ECONOMIC CRISIS: 1903-1920

The last decades of the nineteenth century had been dominated, by and large, by the issue of language. It did not disappear with the dawn of the new century. By June 1903 it had resulted in the demise of representative government and the return of Malta to the status of a Crown Colony proper, with a Legislative Council composed of an official majority and an elected minority.[1] In fact the "language question" was to persist until 1940 when Italy, entering the war on Germany's side, attacked Malta. But, in the first decades of the twentieth century, it was the grave financial and economic condition of the islands, rather than language, that was to be the dominant issue of the time. Between 1906 and 1911 a series of successive annual deficits, averaging about £16,600,[2] the cost of a number of extraordinary works [3] and a sharp decline in government revenue,[4] rapidly drove Malta towards bankruptcy. This crisis was to have a terrible impact on the Islands' rapidly expanding population and was, eventually, made worse by the rapid rise in inflation which accompanied the Great War of 1914-18. In 1919, as a result of the social distress prevailing in Malta, serious rioting broke out in Valletta.[5]

For the Maltese civil service this economic crisis had three main implications. First, as was the case in the past, responsibility for, or mitigation of, the economic crisis was either placed on the shoulders of senior administrators or sought in retrenchment of public service personnel and expenditure. Political leaders, for example, blamed the unfavourable economic condition of Malta on the existing system of bureaucratic government. Remove the power of decision-making and public expenditure from a group of irresponsible and unaccountable bureaucrats, they argued, vest them in a number of elected, therefore accountable and responsible, representatives of the people and, immediately, the causes of maladministration and inefficiency, if not corruption, are removed.[6] For

their part, Colonial officials in London held that the single most important reason for the crisis in Malta, was its vast, complex and costly administration. Thus, once again, London found itself grappling with the problem of retrenchment in Malta and as we shall see in this Chapter, by 1911 another Royal Commission was being asked to examine 'the various departments of the public service'[7] to see whether reductions could be effected.

A second outcome was the growth of working class militancy, especially in the harbour, the dockyards and the public service. Workers' organisations, mainly of the mutual benefit type, first appeared in Malta in the last decades of the nineteenth century, but after 1905, as the crisis bit deeper, many workers, notably in the dockyard and the public service, proceeded to establish unions and associations which were modelled on, and affiliated to, the British trade union movement. The setting up of a Whitley Council system in Malta was, as we shall see below, one of the aims of the Malta Civil Service Association, which was established in 1919.[8] To some extent the riots of 1919 were evidence of this new militancy.

The final outcome of this crisis was the grant, in 1921, of a modified form of responsible government to Malta. The decision to allow party government in Malta was taken in 1919 partly in appreciation of the role played by the Maltese in the 1914-18 war, partly in response to the riots of 1919, but mainly because of the grave economic situation prevailing in Malta.[9] It will be demonstrated below that, by this time, London had come to accept that, in Malta, bureaucratic government was no longer feasible and that, probably, no improvement in the finances of the Islands could be expected unless some form of responsible government was introduced.[10] The public service under responsible government will be one of the main themes examined in the following Chapter. But, as we discuss in this Chapter the other two developments, i.e. the role attributed to the civil service for

the economic crisis in Malta and the rise of public service unions, we shall go a good part of the way in understanding some of the questions to which the introduction of this system of government was expected to give rise.

#### ECONOMIC CRISIS AND ITS IMPACT

In Malta economic "boom" has always been followed by "depression". The principal reason for this was that Malta's economy had for decades been a client economy, servicing the needs of the fortress. Hence, a sudden rise in imperial spending in Malta, occasioned either by the number of works connected with the fortress, or by the number of regiments and naval warships stationed in the Islands, usually gave rise to a situation of relative prosperity.[11] During this period prices of commodities and rents tended to rise as well but, as with every boom, wages tended to stay ahead of prices. However, once these works ceased or the British military and naval presence in Malta was reduced, crisis normally followed.[12] Unemployment tended to rise sharply and wages to drop dramatically, but it took time before prices and rents fell proportionally. Between 1898 and 1906 history merely repeated itself but, with the difference, that this was to be the biggest boom that Malta was ever to experience in one hundred and sixty-four years of British rule. It was also to be followed, after 1905, with one of the most devastating depressions that the Maltese were ever to suffer.

The basis for the boom in turn of the century Malta could be found, before 1898, in the implementation of the drainage scheme, the transition from stone aqueducts to iron pipes for water distribution, the introduction of a railway line between Valletta and Mdina, and the works connected with the electrification of the island.[13] In 1901 further works for extending the drainage works to the country districts, for the building of new schools, waterworks, hospitals and roads, involving an estimated expenditure of £380,500, (the government had intended to spend £600,000),

were sanctioned by means of an Order-in-Council.[14] Shortly afterwards, the construction of a breakwater at the mouth of the Grand Harbour and a new drydock were also begun. The Admiralty bore the full cost of the new dock and with the War Office contributed towards the cost of some of the other works, notably drainage, the breakwater, and roads, insofar as these works were deemed to affect 'Naval and Military interests'[15] As a result, naval and military spending in Malta, inclusive of that of military and naval personnel stationed in Malta, had reached, by 1904, an estimated £2 million sterling annually.[16]

The enormous cost of many of these new works called for a sudden rise in taxation but, as unemployment dwindled rapidly, this inconvenience was apparently forgotten. Before his promotion abroad Strickland had claimed that, as the 'workman wants work',[17] these works would satisfy this want. Furthermore, he had argued that, in their own way, all these new works would contribute towards raising the quality of life of the average Maltese.[18] There was some truth to this assertion. Improving the sanitary condition of the towns and villages, providing homes with potable water and extending other facilities did contribute in a tangible manner towards this and, while these new schemes lasted, the working class enjoyed unprecedented prosperity. As the demand for labour rose, wages soared; imports of consumer goods expanded; and material expectations rose. Miles of new houses were constructed. Towns and villages expanded and traffic on the roads increased.[19] People also married younger and between 1901 and 1911 the population had increased by a further 15%.[20] In 1904-5 Government revenue reached an all time high of £467,335. The surplus balances of the government, at £160,000, were also the highest on record.[21] As the bulk of the revenue was obtained from custom duties and other forms of indirect taxation, both the increase in revenue and in surpluses reflected the existing real purchasing power enjoyed by the population.

The turnaround from "boom" to "depression" came about as suddenly as the former had done. By 1906 the works were finished. Unemployment rose sharply, wages crashed and panic set in. People rushed to emigrate.[22] The government's bill for the charities rose to £68,000 by 1909.[23] while its revenue plunged. In 1906 the government recorded a deficit of £14,330; in 1907 of £17,592; in 1909 of £24,842, and in 1910 of £26,246. By 1911 the government reserve fund was practically exhausted and the local authorities had virtually nothing to fall back on.[24] The local government now found itself in grave difficulties. The elected members, who at the time were pursuing a policy of "astensionismo" by boycotting Council meetings, pointed out to the public that they had repeatedly warned against the dangers inherent in the measures which had been adopted by London and Malta. They had argued, when these works were first proposed, that Malta was too poor to bear either the cost or the new taxes which these projects involved. That undertaking them all at once would undermine and destabilize the economy and that, eventually, a crisis would ensue. The government, they had concluded, was spending its revenues without a care for the future.[25] Others had asked

'why the Imperial Government not pay this expense if the soldiers and sailors require wide roads, water and drainage?'[26]

In 1902, the government and the general public were warned against the growing euphoria which was growing apace with the new prosperity. Once the existing works were finished, they were told, crisis would follow. In the meantime, a 'few years of prosperity'[27] would accustom the average working man to a style of life which it would be impossible for him to sustain.

Thus, once again, the accusing finger was pointing to the government, to the bureaucracy that squandered the taxes of the people, which had ignored the advice of their elected representatives and which betrayed the trust of the Maltese. Faced by these difficulties and these attacks, in October 1906, the Governor appointed a sub-committee of the Executive



## Council

'to consider the question of establishing a permanent equilibrium between revenue and expenditure.'[28]

The alternatives before this committee, however, were mainly two: retrenchment or increased taxation, both of them unpopular with committee members and the public. In the last decades of the nineteenth century the bureaucracy had grown even more larger. Technological and social progress had given rise to the Electricity and Water Works Department, the Health Department and the Railway Department, the latter having been taken over by the government from its private owners.[29] The "Malta (use of English Language in Legal Proceedings) Order-in-Council" of 1899, which had legalised the use of English in the Courts, had also resulted in more clerks being employed with the government.[30] Consequently, the number of public servants on the fixed pensionable establishment, had risen from 1,972 in 1894 to 2,597 in 1903[31] while, within the same nine-year period, the number of clerks had jumped from 119 to 190.[32] The committee decided, however, that adding to the growing army of the unemployed would give the government no advantage. Not only would it make it more unpopular but it would cause a further decline in its revenue. Persons with no money to spend, given the indirect nature of taxation in Malta, paid hardly any taxes. Instead, they became wholly dependent on government charity to see them through the crisis. The government, therefore, suffered both ways: its revenue declined while its expenditure increased. Hence, when the committee reported, in April 1907, it recommended the imposition of increased taxation to the extent of £37,800 a year.[33]

This measure proved equally unpopular with the Maltese public and worse, it failed to stem the decline in the government's revenue. A second committee was, therefore, set up towards the end of 1908 but, this time, to inquire into the working of government departments with the aim of recommending retrenchment.[34] But this committee, while recommending a number of reductions, it too failed to indicate how effective retrenchment

in the public service could be achieved. It held, instead, that the crisis in Malta had nothing to do with the size of the public service or its activities but with developments over which the government could exercise no control, such as the loss of revenue arising from the withdrawal from Malta of nearly the whole of the Mediterranean naval squadron and of several military regiments of the line.[35] The Earl of Crewe, Secretary of State for the Colonies, was not favourably impressed by the efforts of the government. He decided to intervene personally. His first act was to reform the local Customs Department, one of the principal revenue departments in the colony. In 1908 he sent to Malta Mr Robert MacCarthy, a UK Customs official, to carry the task.[36] McCarthy found that

‘public money was squandered throughout the service on excessive staff and that efficiency as well as economy would result from the application of the pruning knife.’[37]

His recommendations, which were accepted by the Secretary of State, resulted, over the next two years, to the Customs Department in savings of over £14,000. This led Crewe, in December 1909, to instruct the Governor to appoint a Finance Committee to consider the financial requirements of the government and to review the findings of the 1908 committee on retrenchment.

As London waited patiently for the report two issues, notably the few reductions effected in the clerical establishment and the position of the Lt Governor, engaged its attention. Mr Cox, one of the officials responsible for Maltese affairs at the Colonial Office, observed, in May 1910, that in the clerical establishment eleven clerkships had been abolished. However, he also observed that all the reductions had been confined to the lowest class of clerks.[38] He thought this to be rather unfair on the lower grades and feared that, if the Finance Committee did recommend further reductions, the same system would probably be adopted. ‘It seems to me’, he minuted, that when wholesale reductions in establishment were made, these reductions

'should properly be distributed proportionally among the various grades, as opportunities'[39]

arose. He held this to be of more relevance in the case of Malta where, notwithstanding the division of the clerical service into classes,

'no distinction is made between the work of the various grades, and therefore no departmental reorganisation is rendered necessary.'

Lord Crewe agreed and the Governor in Malta was instructed to adhere, in future, to the principle 'that the more highly paid clerkships should be reduced pro rata with the junior class'.[40] Lord Crewe also intimated to the Governor that he thought the existing salaries of civil servants too high.

Sir Leslie Rundle, the Governor, rejected both of these instructions. The 'numerical strength of each class',[41] he argued, had been last fixed in 1903, 'after very careful consideration' and with the concurrence of both the elected members and the Secretary of State for the time being. Hence, any reduction in the number of clerks 'especially in the Ist Class, would be regarded as a serious hardship by the members of the clerical establishment.' What the Governor meant was that, in Malta, it was unthinkable that a man of mature age with family and established social responsibilities should be made redundant so that a younger man, perhaps recently out of school or university and with no such responsibilities, should be kept on. In practice, the numerical strength of each class had been established in 1895 but, for one reason or another, but mainly patronage and expansion, more clerks were added to the service with the tacit approval of the elected members and the Colonial Office.[42] At times this approval was formal, as in 1903, when the addition of ten new clerks and the promotion of others were approved by Chamberlain on the ground that they were necessary to give effect to his Order-in-Council sanctioning the use of English in the Law Courts.[43] As to salaries, the Governor did not think 'the clerical branch...extravagantly paid.'[44] He pointed out to Lord Crewe, quite correctly, that although the cost of living had been on

the rise for the last thirty years the maximum salary which a clerk in the highest class could hope to receive was that fixed 'by Sir Penrose Julyan as far back as 1879.'

Officials in London attributed Rundle's resistance to their instructions mainly to the influence of Sir Edward Merewether, the Lt Governor in Malta.[45] Merewether was appointed Lt Governor in 1902 in place of Sir Gerald Strickland who had been Chief Secretary of Malta since 1890.[46] Chamberlain had hoped that the new appointee would be capable of exercising greater tact and reserve in his dealings with the opposition than Strickland had ever done. This, after all, had been the principal reason for moving the latter out of Malta.[47] The results did not do justice to these expectations. In 1910, a polite plea from the leader of the elected members, (who in 1907 had abandoned their policy of "astensionismo" and returned to the Council Chamber), for the Colonial Office to 'call to reason' the local bureaucracy, brought the matter to a head. 'Sir E. Merewether', declared Cox, was incapable of a policy of tactful management 'and no good will be done until he is moved and a more suitable man...substituted for him'.[48] On this Governor Rundle agreed. Although an able and loyal officer, in Malta, Rundle wrote, Merewether 'was a square peg in a round hole'.[49] Rundle strongly favoured the abolition of the office of Lt Governor and its substitution by that of Chief Secretary, a view supported by the elected members.

In London the reaction was mixed. The suggestion accorded fully with the policy being pursued by the Colonial Office in other colonies at that very time.[50] But Malta was not like other colonies. 'Malta' minuted Edward Wingfield at the Colonial Office,

'is largely a military show; and whenever this is the case the civilian official element has trouble enough keeping its end up against the military'.[51]

He also thought the view of the elected members suspect since it was in deference to the opinion of the elected bench in Malta, that the office had

been created.[52] Thus, while he fully agreed that Merewether should be replaced at the first opportunity, he was not keen to see the office abolished. Consequently, it was agreed in London that Major Clauson, a retired army officer, but with proven ability in public administration, should be appointed in place of Merewether.[53]

In January 1911, more than a year after its appointment, the Finance Committee finally presented its report.[54] It too failed to recommend any significant economies in administration and, like its predecessors, proposed the imposition of additional taxation to the extent of £43,000 a year.[55] Colonial officials in London reacted sharply. One official warned of the dangers of suddenly increasing existing duties 'very considerably'. [56] He admitted, however, that the extra revenue needed to 'be raised as quickly as possible'. Wingfield agreed, although he expressed annoyance that conditions in Malta continued to make it impossible to abolish the grain tax. He suggested, therefore, the appointment of a Royal Commission which 'if well constituted...might supply the driving power for some useful reforms'[57] including retrenchment. Wingfield believed that the idea would be favourably received, even in Malta, if the Commission's 'terms of reference included an enquiry into the numbers and efficiency of the present civil establishments as well as into the finances, the possible redistribution of taxation and the possibility of finding new sources of revenue.'

Viscount Harcourt, Crewe's successor as Secretary of State for the Colonies, thought the idea of a Royal Commission a good one and informed the Governor of his intention to appoint one.[58] He also made it clear that he was 'not altogether satisfied' with the proposals made by the Finance Committee to deal with the emergency, especially when one kept in view 'the heavy burden of taxation on the poorer classes, and the lack of employment.' Thus, while accepting that additional sources of revenue had to 'be tapped without waiting for the appointment of a Royal Commission', he stressed that any fresh taxation was to be regarded as provisional in character, pending the results of the Royal Commission. In his reply the

Governor claimed to welcome the appointment of a Royal Commission, but his despatch leaves no doubt that he, in fact, considered its appointment as nothing less than a formal and public censure of his government's inability to deal with the crisis. He pointedly retorted, that critics at the Colonial Office, shielded from local pressures, tended to lose sight of two important facts. First, that

'although the difficulties likely to be encountered in dealing with the affairs of a small place like Malta may appear on the surface to be of small moment, they really are sometimes quite considerable in their consequences.'[59]

And second, that while officials, meaning governors, 'appointed to exercise authoritative functions' in Malta come out to the colony

'with the best intentions, they soon realize the fact that their efforts cannot be successful unless they adopt that sympathetic attitude...so helpful in dealing with a southern people'.

In other words, for the man on the spot, the real issue was not one of choosing what appeared to be the best or most sensible course of action, but of choosing that which had the best chance of success, given the peculiar circumstances of the colony.

A three men Commission, composed of Francis Mowatt as Chairman, Russell Rea, and MacKenzie Chalmers as members, arrived in Malta in November 1911. Their instructions empowered them to look into the finances and economy of the Islands, every aspect of the public service, and into the existing judicial practices and procedures which, according to London, prejudiced individual rights and caused loss of trade and custom to the colony.[60] The Report of the Royal Commission on the Finances, Economic Position and Judicial Procedure of Malta of 1911, as its report became formally known, provides, to this day, the best account of the economic implications for Malta arising from its strategic geographic location and its centuries old role as a fortress. the Report states that,

'For centuries, the people of Malta have never been a self-supporting community. Their own agriculture, industries and commerce have never supported them. They have always been able to rely on a large expenditure in the Island of revenues drawn from outside sources. This has by no means produced a pauperised and parasitic population, but it has diverted

industry from production for internal consumption and external trade to work for the Government and the foreign governing class.'

This, the Commissioners noted, was true under the Order of St John but, from the beginning of the British occupation too,

'the Government...has diverted more of the labour of the population to the service, direct or indirect, of the foreign government, which applied it to purposes entirely imperial and unconnected with the special interests of the colony.'[61]

Consequently, of this was that nearly the whole of the Maltese working population had come to depend for its livelihood, directly or indirectly, on the fortress. A sudden drop in imperial expenditure, as actually happened in the first decade of the twentieth century, tended to 'reduce a large section of the population to idleness and starvation'[62] because it blotted 'out...a large measure of the employment of the people.'[63]

Nevertheless, the remedies that the Commissioners proposed were not by any means new nor were they to have any significant impact. Indeed, Lord Balogh and Professor Seers wrote, forty-four years later, that 'it is astonishing, and ominously significant, how much of the Report of the 1912 Royal Commission applies today.'[64] Unemployment and the pressures of a redundant population, the Commissioners suggested, could be relieved by mass emigration.[65] Second, that the Imperial Government should contribute towards the maintenance of all public works which, directly or indirectly, affected the health and comfort of the armed services. Third, that the Imperial Government should, either discontinue charging Malta £5,000 annually as contribution for its defence, or pay a fair rent for all the sites and buildings used by H.M.'s Forces in Malta for purposes other than fortifications. Fourth, they recommended that the bread tax should be reduced by one half, the lost revenue being made up from duties on other items, such as imported tobacco, beer and sugar, and possibly, from an imposition of a succession duty and a tax on houses. This, they believed, would lead to a fairer distribution in the incidence of taxation than that which existed at the time. Fifth, with respect to the law courts, Mowatt

and his colleagues recommended, that judicial proceedings should be simplified, the number of courts, judges and staff gradually reduced, the scale of Court fees revised upwards and that the judicial establishments be made more self-supporting. As to language, the "bete noire" of Maltese politics, the Commissioners stated, in an unequivocal manner, their view that, in the inferior courts, the oral proceedings should be conducted in Maltese, and not in Italian, and that in the superior court a Maltese should be entitled, if he so wished, to have his case tried in his native Maltese.[66]

Finally, the Commissioners expressed the opinion that

‘relief from financial difficulties must be sought in the abandonment of the present somewhat ambitious scale of administration and by curtailing expenditure to a point lower than has hitherto been considered consistent with the prosperity of the Islands.’[67]

This implied retrenchment of the sort which the local government had always resisted, even at a time, as between 1906 and 1911, when it was obvious that the colony was heading towards insolvency. But, the Commissioners found, that it was nearly impossible for them to conduct that full and proper investigation into the various departments of the public service which would enable them to point to areas where significant economies could be made. ‘For this purpose’, Mowatt wrote Harcourt, ‘a Royal Commission is a very slow, very expensive, and, what is worse, a very inefficient instrument.’[68] They noted, in their Report, that they had no opportunity to verify the claims which had been made before them, i.e.,

‘that there existed throughout the Civil Service "red-tapeism" and waste of time, that office hours were less than in commercial and manufacturing establishments, and that clerks of the higher classes were often employed upon copying and other routine work’.[69]

Nor were they, from what they had seen and heard, ‘sanguine that large economies’ could be effected in the clerical establishment or in existing salaries. Indeed, the latter did not appear to them to be at all excessive. Nonetheless, the Commissioners were convinced that ‘efficiency, as well as some economy’ could be secured by ‘a careful and systematic inquiry.’ They



therefore suggested, a proposal immediately accepted by the Secretary of State, the setting up of a separate Commission under the chairmanship of Major Clauson, the new Lt Governor.[70] They further advised that, pending the outcome of this inquiry, no existing or future vacancy ought to be filled unless the Clauson Committee was satisfied, and the Governor had been informed accordingly, that it was absolutely necessary to do so.

The Royal Commissioners, however, had their own suggestions to make with regard to the civil service. First, they proposed that the clerical staff should no longer be divided into four classes but, as in Britain, into two, the First and Second Division,[71] thereby providing for a better separation of departmental work into the intellectual and the routine. Second, that

‘the limits of age for admission should be higher and the examination more advanced for the upper class, while a rudimentary test would suffice for the lower.’

It is interesting to note that, personally, Sir Francis Mowatt, the chairman of the Royal Commission, was opposed to the notion of recruitment by examination. He was not only hostile to those who raised the issue but, at one stage of the proceedings, declared that he was glad that he had retired from the Home Civil Service before such a system was introduced.[72] Finally, the Commissioners suggested that a moderate remuneration would be adequate for the lower class while promotion to the upper class was to be rare and only in cases of exceptional merit.

As Laferla wrote, ‘the Royal Commission was productive of some good’. Malta’s contribution of £5,000 a year in aid of the military service was suspended and, for the first time, ordinary Maltese could have their case in court tried in their native tongue, rather than Italian. But it was “The Committee Appointed to Conduct an Investigation into the Expenditure of the Government of Malta and the Organization of the Government Departments”, under the chairmanship of Clauson, (hereafter referred to as the Clauson Committee), that really steered Malta towards a more stable financial

position. It managed to do this because, unlike other committees before it, it was prepared to risk unpopularity by indicating which offices could be safely abolished and by pressing for huge cuts in public expenditure. It was also able to exploit the stand, taken by the elected members of Council before the Royal Commission, in favour of such measures. One after the other they had come forward to condemn the extravagance of the government, its inefficiency, and at times the organisation of the civil service itself. Goffredo Mattei, for example, accused the government of living beyond the means of the island and of lacking effective control over its subordinates.[74] He blamed this on the fact that Heads of Departments were also legislators. 'Their presence as legislators', he claimed, 'removes control over themselves'[75] and hence, over their subordinates.

'They naturally back each other out of sympathy and, being a majority - how can they be efficiently controlled?'

he had asked in 1910. He also attacked the extensive network of charitable institutions belonging to the government. He believed that, with the exception of the Hospitals, they should be handed over to private organisations such as the Church. The people, he declared, were quite willing to sustain these institutions themselves, 'Government interference' serving merely to weaken 'the energy of the Maltese.'[76]

Although Mattei was not in sympathy with the "Nazionalisti", the former "anti-riformisti", his criticism was similar to that of other representatives elected under their banner. 'I consider' said one of them, 'that we are poor...so that when I say that our country is poor I mean that our government is also poor.'[77] He insisted that retrenchment was always possible in 'a luxurious administration' such as that of Malta. Francesco Azzopardi, leader of the party, was more forthright in his view. The crisis in the Island, he told the Royal Commissioners, was entirely due to the increase in the number of public offices and in the annual 'expenditure of the administration',[78] both of which were out of proportion to the exigencies of the population. 'A total reorganization of the [public]

service', was required before economy could be achieved. Others, however, directed their attention to suggesting ways of making the civil service more efficient. Evaristo Castaldi, an elected representative of long-standing, decried the fact that in spite of every past report on the subject, promotion from one class to another had remained firmly based on seniority, whatever the merits of the individuals involved.[79] While he admitted that seniority ought not to be ignored, he stressed that 'the test must be that of efficiency, by examination' consisting of 'all those particular studies' such as finance, statistics and administrative law, which go to make a good head of department a capable legislator and member of the Executive Council. Caruana Gatto, himself a former public servant, propounded much the same view but pointed to the fact that, in the last decades, 'a constant complaint'[80] of all the examiners in civil service examinations was that the educational standard of candidates was lowering. He thought that the existing classification of clerks in four classes should be abandoned in favour of a two-class system.

The Clauson Committee, as we shall see below, was to integrate some of these views within its own report, which was presented to the Governor in January 1913. The Committee considered that its primary task was 'to indicate economies sufficiently great to enable the Government to be carried on without an increase of taxation.'[81] The object in view, they stated, could be achieved by on rigid economy and 'close and continuous administrative control over finance and establishments.' On the one hand, economy was possible, in their view, if expenditure was restricted to such works as were urgently required; by economy in the repair and electric lighting of streets and roads; by placing out to private contract the scavenging and watering of streets; by amalgamating the Central Hospital with the Poor House and by strictly limiting admission to both these institutions to destitute persons who required long term medical care; by the exercise of 'the greatest possible discrimination' in the dispensation

of outdoor relief; and by the utilization, for the purpose of charity, of organisations and institutions run by private religious groups or individuals. Other economies, the Report stated, could be achieved by a reform of the pension system, i.e. by removing from the pensionable establishment all those remunerated by wages paid on a daily basis and others, such as doctors employed as Police Physicians. They also recommended the abolition of no less than 19 clerkships and several other minor offices.

On the other hand, the Committee held that control over finances and establishments could be achieved, if the machinery for the exercise of effective control over expenditure was improved, if the principles governing public expenditure, as set out in the Colonial Regulations were strictly adhered to, and if several subheads relating to expenditure were removed from the schedule under the Governor's General Warrant and made the subject of special control. This, the Committee argued, would ensure close government control over all departmental expenditure which was not of a merely routine character.[82] It was noted in fact that, in the past, excesses on these subheads had been too numerous. The Committee also called for a redefinition of the duties of the Receiver-General and the Auditor-General pointing to the incomplete separation that existed between these two offices. The duties of the former, the Committee insisted, should be those defined by the Colonial Regulations, i.e. those of control and supervision, even in the nature of a pre-audit, over public finance and accounts. As in the Colonial Regulations too, his designation should be that of Treasurer. As to the position of the Auditor-General, the Committee felt that it was not right that this officer should hold a seat on any of the existing Councils in Malta. It was his responsibility to ensure that each individual department, and the government as a body, was conducting its affairs according to the financial regulations and to call attention to irregularities when they failed to do so. But he could not be expected to

examine decisions in which he had previously participated and acquiesced in as a member of the Executive and Legislative Council. They strongly felt, therefore, that the time had come for 'placing the audit of the accounts of Malta under a system which is more in accordance with modern ideas and methods'[83] by appointing a staff Auditor from among, and under the supervision of, the newly organised Colonial Audit Department. This, the Committee held, would also allow for an independent audit to be carried out free from the pressures and internal politics of a small community.

These measures, however, the Committee reported, had to be complemented by the upgrading of the existing mechanisms for controlling expenditure within individual departments. The Committee stated that, within departments, 'the authorized methods of accounting and checking'[84] were closely followed and that 'the standard of conscientiousness in regard to money matters throughout the Malta civil service' was a very high one. However, the Committee found that 'financial ability and grasp of the principles of economical administration', as distinct from ordinary routine requirements, appeared to be rare. It recommended, therefore, the creation, within the principal spending departments (Public Works, charitable Institutions, Customs and Health Departments), of the office of Financial Assistant to the Head of Department. His duties were to include those of keeping himself fully informed of the details of current departmental expenditure,

'of calling attention to extravagant or unnecessary expense, and of indicating measures calculated to lead to economy and retrenchment.'[85]

The authority and personal responsibility of Heads of Departments for affairs within their departments was, however, to remain unimpaired. But Financial Assistants were to be regarded as having a certain measure of direct responsibility to the Government and, 'in the event of an irregular or extravagant transaction taking place' were, unless it could be shown that they had made representations to their Heads on the matter, to be regarded as jointly culpable with them.

One obstacle in favour of this reform was, according to the Clauson Committee, that those forming the First Class of the clerical establishment did not 'furnish suitable material'[86] for these, and other responsible, duties 'second only in importance' to those of Head of Department. The reasons which the Committee gave for this state of affairs were identical to those submitted by the elected members in their evidence before the Royal Commission of 1911, namely excessive regard to claims of seniority over those of merit and official qualification when giving promotions, and the 'unfortunately notorious' practice of employing First Class clerks on copying and other unimportant duties. As a result, the advancement of the more competent officials, often discharging arduous and responsible duties, was blocked. The fact of the matter was, that promotion, granted solely on the basis of seniority, was not in accordance with Colonial Regulations which laid down that, while the claims of candidates for promotion were to be considered in order of their seniority, selection was mainly to be decided on grounds of merit. The situation in the other three classes of the clerical establishment was equally unsatisfactory. Not only were promotions granted, except on rare occasions, on the basis of seniority, but these classes were so overcrowded, each having over fifty clerks, that prospects of promotion were extremely poor. Statistics showed that 'a young man of education and intelligence' had to wait a considerable number of years before attaining promotion to the class above his own. The Report concluded that,

'the facts constitute a serious condemnation of the existing organization of the Clerical Establishment...and, on grounds of increased departmental efficiency'[87]

proposed a new classification, the fourth in just over 30 years.

Under the proposed new classification (see below), the existing First Class of clerks, consisting of 18 officers, was to be abolished and replaced by a number of, (initially 15), special appointments. These officers were expected to perform specific duties which were actually

required in a particular department, such as those of Financial Assistants. The Committee stressed that these special appointments 'should be filled by officers who have given proof of special aptitude, either administrative, financial, or legal.' [88] As they anticipated that, at least six of those presently in the First Class were not fit to fill any of these special appointments, the Committee proposed that the latter should be filled by selection from among clerks of the First and Second Class. First Class clerks who failed the selection process were to be retired on a pension once their class was abolished. Of the remaining 155 clerks in the other three classes, i.e. 49 in the Second Class, 55 in the Third Class, and 51 in the Fourth Class, 113 were to be distributed among three new grades. 49 clerks in the First Grade, 20 in the Second and 44 in the Third. The 42 clerks (of the original 155) who remained from the existing Fourth class were then to become supernumerary clerks and the Committee proposed that those of them who passed a qualifying examination within the next three years, were to be eligible to fill vacancies in the new Third Grade. It was also proposed that, in future, admission to the clerical establishment should be to the Third Grade, after competitive examination. With respect to First Grade clerkships, the Committee was of the view that eventually these should be reserved to officers capable of performing the higher classes of work. Other competent officials were to attain the maximum salary of the new Second Grade after not more than 15 years service.

PROPOSED NEW CLASSIFICATION			
GRADE	STARTING SALARY	INCREMENTS	MAXIMUM SALARY
3rd	£60	£5	£100
2nd	£110	£5	£180
1st	£220	£10	£250

The Committee expressed itself satisfied that the adoption of these recommendations would serve, not only to relieve the stagnation that existed in the clerical grades, but to better the career prospects of

deserving officers without, at the same time, involving larger expenditure over the next few years. London reacted with enthusiasm to the Report urging commitment in its adoption on the local government.[90] The proposal to appoint Financial Assistants and other officers to assist and at the same time to help check on the part of individual Heads, the inefficient use of financial resources by individual Heads, appeared to Colonial officials to be worthy of immediate implementation. It was felt that, for the first time, a scheme for controlling public expenditure was finally at hand. In Malta too, some applauded the 'recommended drastic economies in public expenditure'.[91] But generally speaking reductions in offices, as always, proved unpopular.

Many civil servants, writing to newspapers under assumed names, objected to the cuts but their principal complaint was against the notion of basing promotions mainly on merit without the criteria that constituted merit being made explicit from the outset.[92] Others claimed that, while in recommending merit the intentions of the Committee were honourable, they feared that in a small community such as that of Malta merit would become nothing less than a cover for nepotism.[93] Seniority, they argued, would at least reward and punish the competent and the incompetent without distinction. It was a view which, though not enjoying full support at the Colonial Office, and against regulations, attracted some sympathy. In the past Colonial officials had found it necessary to ask Governors to justify, when recommending names of officers for promotion to responsible offices, their rigid adherence to seniority when it appeared to them that the public good would be better served by the promotion of other officers.[94] At other times the feeling in London was that an opposite course should have been adopted, and that it was the most senior officer who ought to have been recommended for promotion.[95] But the result of these enquiries tended to be the same on every occasion. Colonial officials were compelled 'to support the Governor's selection; trusting to his judgement'[96] since



they knew precious little about the individuals concerned. Governors were required to send home, every year, 'a confidential report on the qualifications of persons in the public service who are fitted for promotion',[97] but it is clear, when one keeps in mind the findings of the many reports we have discussed in this and other Chapters, that, in Malta, these confidential assessments were of little value. The conferment of promotion on the basis of seniority was attractive for most Governors. Seniority was politically safe. It may give rise to criticism. One or more of the elected members would rise to express their view that promotions ought to have been granted on the basis of merit. But it did not give rise to protests to London[98] or to accusations in the Council of favouritism, nor served as an excuse for violent attacks against the government in newspapers hostile to it.[99] Unlike merit, seniority was an easily definable and defensible criterion.

Financial difficulties and pressure from London forced the local government to implement many of the reforms outlined in the Clauson Committee Report. The result was, that on 3rd January 1914, Governor Rundle, while inaugurating a new session of the Council of Government, stated that 'the island had passed safely through the crisis which brought it to the verge of insolvency.'[100] But the transfer of Clauson to Cyprus in December 1914, the distractions of the War in Europe and its impact on the cost of living in Malta, dealt the reform process a severe blow. Thus, although most of the Committee's proposals regarding the clerical service were retained, one contemporary claimed that Clauson's 'successors.....ignored his schemes and revoked the measures that he had already carried into effect.'[101] A rapid jump in the cost of living eroded the real earnings of most employees of the public service and for many the situation bordered on the desperate. Dockyard workers, teachers and civil servants began to combine to press their claims on the government. A new militancy, which had been altogether lacking among public

servants until then, became daily more evident. A new era in the history of the Maltese public service appeared to be on the brink.

#### THE EMERGENCE OF PUBLIC SERVICE UNIONS

In July 1914 the Great Powers of Europe exchanged rivalry for enmity by going to war against each other. They were, by and large, the most advanced industrial nations in the world and, within their borders, there already existed large workers' organizations. In Malta, industry had become synonymous with the naval dockyard, which was based in the creeks around the Three Cities, and which employed thousands of skilled and unskilled Maltese workers. It was here that the first combination of workers appeared in 1885.[102] It was a benefit society set up by workers to help them in time of illness, injury, or in case of death, their dependents. It survived the unscrupulous attacks of the Nazionalisti and the censure of the Catholic Church both of which accused it of fomenting class hatred.[103] But the example set by this society was soon copied by other groups of workers in the dockyard, at times with the help of British workers.[104] But the first industrial strike, when it came in February 1900, occurred among coal heavers in the harbour who, until then, were unorganized.[105] The government intervened on the side of the workers and against the steamship agents, enacting in Council an Ordinance regulating the wages of port workers.[106] A strike by dockyard workers followed in November 1902 and although the union failed to gain concessions, 'contrary to what was expected, there were no reprisals from the authorities.'[107] A second strike was organized at the dockyard in 1917 and on this occasion the union involved managed to secure a 50% increase in wages instead of the 10% offered by the Admiralty.[108]

So far Maltese public servants had not demonstrated such unity of purpose. In fact, no formal machinery existed through which public servants, individually or collectively, could give vent to their grievances. An analogous situation existed in Britain at the beginning of

the 20th century but, by 1914, associations of public servants had become commonplace.[109] Indeed, as a result of memorials and other actions, these associations had, by 1909, induced the government to improve their pension entitlement and other related matters through an Act of Parliament.[110] In Britain, according to Macaulay, 'the dangers of the Home Front in 1914-18'[111] were met by the government with deferential appeals to the people and by concessions to its employees. Thus, in 1916, the government announced the setting up of a standing arbitration tribunal, under the chairmanship of Whitley, Speaker of the House of Commons, to decide, during the war, questions of wages arising between the government and its civil employees.[112] In 1919 the recommendations of the Whitley Council, as it became generally known, were approved by an Interdepartmental Committee and, in the following year, a National Whitley Council, composed of representatives of the government and its employees, was created to deal with questions affecting the civil service as a whole.[113]

In Malta, the war gave rise to a difficult situation, mainly because the Island needed to import the great bulk of its food requirement. As a result prices rocketed to new heights. The price of bread rose threefold, of sugar fourfold and of meat three and half times.[114] The government intervened to the extent of granting large subsidies to the millers and by creating boards for the purpose of controlling prices and to organise the importation and distribution of food.[115] Similarly to what happened during the Crimean War, the conflict provided the Maltese working classes with abundant opportunities for employment, both in Malta and in, or around, the scattered battlefields.[116] But, also as in 1854-56, those employed on a fixed wage, such as civil servants, suffered terribly. In May 1918 members of the clerical establishment lodged a protest with the Governor with respect to their existing condition. Their aim, however, was not to appeal 'for relief owing to the conditions occasioned by and in consequence of the war',[117] but to secure long term reform. Hence, the

target of their attack was the classification of the clerical establishment which had been carried into effect following the recommendations of the Clauson Committee. They argued that by fixing the number of clerks in the Second Grade at 20, the Committee had defeated its own declared aim, i.e. that competent officials ought to attain the annual salary of £150, the maximum of the new Second Grade, after not more than fifteen years service. They requested, therefore, that, as soon as circumstances allowed, a commission would be appointed to revise the findings of the Clauson Committee.

The initial response of Long, Secretary of State for the Colonies, was to approve the grant of a rebate in the price of bread for members of the clerical establishments, whose salary was below £150 a year, and of war bonuses to nearly all categories of clerks.[118] This, however, was clearly not enough and, probably influenced by the success of the united stand taken by the dockyard workers, a meeting for all the clerks employed with the government was convened in September 1918 to decide on a plan of action. Those present at the meeting noted that, despite the dramatic rise in the cost of living, 'the rates of salaries of the clerical establishment remained stationary or suffered a set back.'[119] The effects of malnutrition, they claimed, were clearly visible on its members and their families and the capacity of the former for work was impaired. Many clerks had been compelled to withdraw their children from school and to surrender their life insurance policies. They protested that their salaries should, at least, be sufficient to enable them to meet their primary needs but, at the same time, they expressed their confidence that the government would, on this occasion, 'succeed in finding the means of satisfying their just claim.' On the initiative of the conveners of the meeting, six young clerks who were to distinguish themselves in later years,[120] the views of those present were included in a Memorandum which was presented to the Governor by a deputation of clerks.[121]

On this occasion this appeal elicited a spirited reaction from London. The clerks were informed that the Secretary of State refused to recognise that

'members of the Civil Service possess a vested interest forbidding the reduction of the number of higher grade appointments below the number which existed when any member entered the Service.' [122]

Such an assumption would, in his opinion, result in an effectual bar to economy. He also made it clear that any permanent revision of the scales of salary would have to be postponed until after the end of the war when the economic position of Malta would have become clearer. In the meantime, however, he promised that he will 'not refuse to consider the question of granting further [War] bonuses,' if the Governor, 'at any time regarded them as absolutely necessary'. Governor Methuen must have realised that the Secretary's of State reply risked antagonizing the entire clerical establishment, for he delayed communicating the former's reply for almost a month and until he had made his own proposition for an increase in the war bonus of Second and Third Grade Clerks. [123]

In the past, the matter would have probably stopped there, only to be pressed again on the arrival of a new Governor but, in November, a more resolute and determined clerical establishment came back with a second memorandum. In it they refuted the Secretary's of State assertion that they had, at any time, presumed that the Clerical Establishment should not 'expand or shrink as circumstances may require.' [124] What they had presumed was, that 'the Secretary of State will not be influenced only by principles of economy...' It was, in their view, manifestly unjust 'to attract the best men to the Service by a definite scheme which is set aside after a number of years' and by which time it was 'impossible for the individuals concerned to revert to the professions or other callings...' To treat them as if they were casual labourers with no vested interests and entitled to no special consideration, would serve only to defeat the aims of the local government. As to the question of salaries, the clerks claimed

that their difficulties had arisen from the adoption of the recommendations of the Clauson Committee, which had resulted in smaller annual increments. They argued, further, that an immediate revision of salaries, based on the existing Clauson scheme, would not resolve their problems and would fail to do 'full justice to the Clerical Establishment' as it would depart from 'a wrong basis'. [125] They requested, therefore, that, as a first step, a commission should be appointed to investigate their case and 'whether they had legitimate cause of complaint'. Hence, their appeal was not for relief from the conditions occasioned by the war, but for a

'revision of a sentence passed on a whole class of faithful servants without their having been given a chance of being heard in their own defence'.

The tone of the memorandum was indicative of the mood prevailing among members of the clerical establishment and of the many difficulties facing the government in 1918. Some of these difficulties were of an economic and financial nature. As early as January the Governor had informed the Secretary of State that the mass of the population had hardly anything to eat and if paraffin could not be obtained no means to cook the food. [126] Nor could the existing situation be allowed to continue 'without entailing starvation to the general population'. [127] Furthermore, the finances of the government had continued to show a deficit [128] while the poverty of the people precluded any increases in taxation. [129] Those agitating for political reform, often claimed, that Malta was 'groaning' under the weight of a military despotism and 'of the tyrannical bureaucracy of the official members'. [130] Petitions for self-government became more frequent and insistent. In November 1918, this agitation took the worst possible turn for the government when Dr Filippo Sceberras, a lawyer said by the Governor to be 'a gentleman of moderate political views', [131] called on all constituted bodies to convene a representative assembly for the purpose of drawing up a new Constitution for Malta. [132]

Other difficulties which the government faced were, however, of its

own making. In January 1919, in complete disregard of the precarious state of government finances, the Governor proposed to raise the salaries of Heads of Departments serving on the Councils, on the ground, that they should be paid more than those who were 'not amongst the confidential advisers of the Governor'.[133] He also proposed to raise that of the Assistant Secretary to Government as the latter required to be an officer who could 'be relied upon to advise the Lt Governor on administrative and political questions...and who must be qualified' to act in his place. The whole matter induced in Colonial Officials a deep sense of exasperation. One official minuted that the salaries of these Heads were not 'proportionately more inadequate' than those of others in Malta and the case of the Governor was not 'a very strong one.'[134] Another complained that the Governor was 'under the influence of the Maltese Heads of Departments' who were all connected by marriage.[135] But the old argument that the Governor's wishes should be, as nearly as possible, always upheld in order that his authority may not be impaired, prevailed and the increases in salaries were approved.[136] It led one official in London to conclude, however, that in Malta attempts at economy were 'doomed to defeat.'[137]

The reaction among the clerks in Malta was one of disbelief and anger.

A memorandum from the clerks declared that,

'It is very significant that whilst the salary of the Clerical Establishment was being reduced on account of a depleted Treasury, the salaries of other public servants were improved.'[138]

Disgusted with their employer, several clerks were set to attend the sessions of Dr Filippo Sceberras's "Assemblea Nazionale" but they were prevented from doing so, at the last moment, by a government order which compelled them to refrain.[139] One newspaper reported, however, that 'none of them...withdrew his adhesion' to the principles eschewed by the assembly, which meant, that these civil servants had expressed concurrence with a resolution passed by the delegates that called for 'full political

and administrative autonomy' in affairs of a 'local nature and interest.'[140] But the matter was taken a step further in May 1919 when, with political tension rising - there were some street demonstrations and some violent incidents[141] - the clerks formally launched the Malta Civil Service Association, the first of several associations within the public service.[142] The inaugural address by the association's first President left no room for doubt as to the aims and the mood of civil servants. 'Individual interests in any community', he told the General Meeting, could 'best be served by combined effort and by unity of purpose.'[143] Two questions, he said, called for immediate settlement: the improvement of temporary war bonuses and the readjustment of salaries. He referred to their 'recent struggles for subsistence' and their low morale, but appealed to them not to be discouraged. 'Our duty' he exhorted them, 'is to hold together and to work in earnest for a redress of our grievances, for a decent living, and for the happiness of our homes.' He also called on the government to provide, in partnership with the Association, 'a machinery of some sort', no doubt on the lines of the Whitley Councils in the UK, which would make it possible for members of the clerical establishment to ventilate their grievances and to express their views on all matters affecting the civil service. Finally, the President announced the affiliation of their Association with the Society of Civil Servants and the Association of Staff Clerks, both of London, hinting at the moral and material advantages to be gained from this joining of 'hands with...brothers beyond the sea.' It was certainly a sign of the times that, while the clerks were holding their General Meeting, a group of teachers from the Valletta school were petitioning the government for an increase to their salaries.[144] Out of this nucleus of teachers, in November 1919, was born the Malta Union of Teachers which in its turn was affiliated to the NUT in the UK.[145]

Shortly after its General Meeting, the Civil Service Association wrote



to the Lt Governor announcing its formation and asking for formal recognition, while enclosing a copy of its rules, which had been adapted from those of the London societies,[146] and the President's inaugural address.[147] The view in London, was that as the policy then being pursued at home was to grant recognition to such associations, there was no alternative but to 'recognize associations of civil servants in the colonies.' [148] This view was communicated to the Acting Governor in Malta in the middle of July 1919 but by then the crisis in the Island had already reached its climax. On June 7th, 1919, in the wake of massive discharges and the anticipation of more to come, from the armed services and the dockyard, violent riots broke out in Valletta.[149] The Maltese police, who nine months earlier had themselves staged a strike,[150] and the militia, were either unable or unwilling to act, and British soldiers were called out to help restore order. By the time the riots had been quelled six Maltese had been killed and dozens of others injured by the troops, facts symbolic enough that even today the "Sette Giugno" is revered as one of Malta's national holidays.[151] General Hunter-Blair, the Acting Governor, in reporting the incidents concluded that constitutional reform was now inevitable. He regretted that the impression would undoubtedly be, that 'we gave in to the riot'. [152] Nevertheless, he entertained no doubts as to the necessity of changing their stand. This view was shared by London. As early as March a Colonial Office clerk had minuted, that

'it seems clear...there will have to be some concession to the Maltese. We could hardly justify refusing them a degree of "autonomy" and "liberty" which we concede to for example Jamaica where the population is predominantly negro.' [153]

The stumbling block was, as always, the fortress. But L.S. Amery, the Colonial Under-Secretary of State no longer held that the 'fortress argument' [154] was an insuperable one and raised 'the possibility of taking a bold plunge' in the direction of self-government. 'The camouflage system' he concluded, referring to earlier "representative government" constitutions, had 'served its turn possibly', but doubted if it could be

continued.

In Malta, political leaders and the press, more than other groups in Maltese society, seemed to have sensed the drift of feeling among colonial officials, 'that His Majesty's Government was prepared to consider the question of granting Responsible Government.' [155] But, the mere notion that Britain might concede responsible government to Malta, sent shock waves through all levels of the civil service. Heads of Departments, the 'tyrannical bureaucrats', as political leaders called them, did not relish the idea that one day, in the near future, they might have to exchange their status of rulers for that of servants to political masters whose struggle for self-government they had often opposed if not obstructed. As a consequence most of them, with the exception of the Lt Governor, [156] advised against any such concession. Some argued that responsible government was 'outside the realm of practical politics' and that the country was not 'mature for such a concession.' [157] Most advocated a return to the Constitution of 1887 in which 'administrative power was left in the hands of the Executive Council' while the elected members, by virtue of their majority on the Legislative Council, enjoyed the 'freedom', to oppose, but without responsibility. [158] In fact, Heads of Departments feared, that the inception of responsible government would result in loss of earnings - political leaders having consistently made the claim that they were excessively paid - and not impossibly, of office.

Clerks were as alarmed as their Heads at the prospect of responsible government in Malta. In May, at the inaugural meeting of their Association, the President had observed, that people outside the Civil Service, were 'too apt to undervalue and disparage the services' they rendered. [159] It was often said, by a section of the press and

'by persons occupying responsible positions, that the Civil Servant is lavishly paid for his work, and invidious comparisons have often been drawn between the clerks of the Civil Service and the daily wage earners employed by private firms and by wholesale dealers.'

No doubt, the section of the press to which the President of the

Association alluded was the pro-Italian press, now headed by Fortunato Mizzi's son Enrico who, in 1917, was found guilty of sedition by a military Court set up as part of the war emergency.[160] The Association's preference for the English language, the language adopted at the General Meeting, and for affiliation with civil service unions in Britain betrayed, for Enrico Mizzi and his supporters, a servile disposition to the authorities or, at worst, collaboration with the oppressor.[161] Under these circumstances it was reasonable for members of the clerical establishment to suspect that, under a Maltese ministry, their claims for a revision of salaries would be rejected. They, therefore, directed their energies to securing their objectives.

In August 1919, in a letter to Lord Plumer, the new Governor, they reiterated through their Association their demand for a revision of salaries and other conditions of the clerical establishment, and for the institution of a National Whitley Council in Malta.[162] They soon followed up this letter with a memorandum which restated all their grievances including that regarding the classification of clerks by the Clauson Committee which, they claimed, had marked them out in the eyes of 'the better classes of the community as objects of public pity.'[163] At this stage Colonial officials in London were not, at this stage, prepared to be drawn into discussions regarding salaries. Nor were they ready to admit of the necessity or desirability of setting up a Whitley Council in Malta.[164] They confessed to being not quite sure themselves as to what Whitley Councils involved[165] and there was general agreement in the office that, 'until some experience has been gained of the working of such Councils'[166] in England, it was premature to set up a corresponding system in Malta. Furthermore, they felt that, 'before any steps could be taken to set up such machinery for the Civil Service of any colony in particular,' the question of general applicability of Whitley Councils to colonies in general had to be considered. On this point the Secretary of

State remained resolute, even in the face of an appeal, on behalf of their local affiliates by the London Association of Staff Clerks.[167]

Despite this reluctance from London, the Maltese Association did gain one of its objectives when, in September, Governor Plumer appointed a Committee, composed of three officials and two elected members

'to consider and report upon the question of revising the salaries of the employees in the various Departments of the Civil Service.'[168]

The Committee presented its report in November 1919 but the two elected members refused to endorse it.[169] The Report confirmed the general view that the existing salaries of government employees were altogether inadequate.[170] It proposed to remedy this state of affairs in two ways. First, by increases on a percentage basis and in inverse proportion to the amount of existing salaries. This was intended to benefit most those in the lower ranks of the public service. Second, that in the case of the Clerical Establishment, the percentage increases of salaries would be reckoned on the salaries that would have been attained under the 1895 classification. This meant, in practice, that for purposes of increases of salaries the existing classification of the clerical establishment, i.e. the Clauson classification, was to be ignored. This appeared to vindicate the claim of the Civil Service Association that the Clauson scheme, while successful in its drive to produce savings, was ultimately unjust as it altered the conditions by which many clerks had been attracted to the service.[171] The Governor supported the Report pointing to the 'real and genuine distress among the lower ranks of the service' as his reason for doing so.[172]

One of the two elected members on the Committee, both of whom had refused to sign the report, was Enrico Mizzi. According to the Governor, both had conceded the necessity of raising the salaries of government employees who earned £150 per annum or less. For those earning between £150 and £300 they thought that an increase equal to the existing war bonus was sufficient. But they were not prepared to grant any increase to officers earning over £300 a year. They were also of the view that the proposed

increases should not be considered as permanent additions to salaries, but more in the way of allowances and, therefore, subject to periodical adjustment according to the increase or decrease in the cost of living and the state of the revenue.[173] These views, it must be said, were consistent with the stated position held over the years by elected members that, under normal conditions the salaries of many public servants were not merely adequate but excessive. But, as with everything else in Malta, there was another side to the story. On November 20th, 1919, five days before the Committee reported, the announcement was made simultaneously in London and in Malta, that it had been decided 'to entrust the people of Malta with full responsible control of their purely local affairs.'[174] For this reason the elected members, while having no desire to antagonize the entire public service by opposing all increases of salaries, were not prepared to add to the burdens of a government which they hoped to assume shortly. Even so, most civil servants feared, that unless the recommendations of the official side were implemented at once, they would, eventually, be discarded under responsible government.[175]

The Colonial Office found itself caught in a difficult situation which called for delicate handling. Colonial officials were fully aware of the long history of antagonism that existed between the elected members and the official side, but they did not wish to be seen to be taking sides. On the one hand, there existed a desire to defend 'civil servants in Malta against possible injustice at the hands of Maltese ministers.'[176] Following the November announcement petitions in this sense flooded the Colonial Office from various sources. Civil servants appealed for the inclusion, in the new Constitution, of safeguards which guaranteed their existing salary and pension rights.[177] British public service unions, with which local associations were affiliated, in the meantime pressed for the implementation of the salary increases proposed by the recent committee.[178] The Governor too extended his support for these efforts. In

one of his letters to the Secretary of State Plumer demonstrated that, if some of the present elected members were to become ministers, they could not avoid, if they were to act consistently with their public declarations, but curtail these rights.[179] Others, such as sanitary officers, appealed to London to place them on the pensionable establishment, while the Governor urged the promotion of individual office holders on the ground that under responsible government their merits would very likely be ignored and others would be promoted in their place.[180] Because of their own experiences as public servants, Colonial officials could not remain insensitive to these appeals by or on behalf of another bunch of public officers. On the other hand, however, if they gave in to these appeals they risked incurring the disapprobation of Maltese politicians, especially as most of these measures would have had to be carried through Council by means of the odious official majority. This would lay the Secretary of State open to the charge, already being made by some,[181] that His Majesty's Government was not truly committed to giving them responsible government and was deliberately trying to undermine it by adding to the financial burdens of the Island.[182]

There was some sympathy for this view in London. One official minuted that, once in harness, the new ministers will

'come to the conclusion that the Civil Service established (nominally) under the authority of the Colonial Office is on too ambitious a scale for the resources of the Island and that retrenchment'[183]

in salaries, was absolutely necessary. He questioned whether the Colonial Office was 'called upon to organize opposition to such a measure.' A warning to this effect was sounded by the Director of Naval Intelligence in Malta when he informed Amery, the Under-Secretary, that the proposed revision of salaries had created considerable agitation.[184] He also informed London that Heads of Departments perceived it to be vital to their interests to obstruct, as much as it was in their power to do so, the smooth transition to responsible government. In the circumstances the

Secretary of State for the Colonies, while admitting that it was not possible to please both sides, decided on a middle course. He approved the increases in the salaries to members of the public service in line with the wishes of the official side but remanded every other demand for the consideration of the new government to be installed within a year or so.[185]

Throughout 1920, however, these matters were overshadowed by the discussions then going on over a new constitution for Malta. Once again how to reconcile British strategic interests in Malta with Maltese political aspirations was at the forefront of the debate. London no longer thought that this was impossible but nonetheless wanted its powers in Malta clearly defined. But, if anything, the dangers to responsible government appeared to be all internal. Would political leaders, inexperienced in party government, be able to handle the political pressures to which such a system normally gave rise while, at the same time, remaining faithful to both the spirit and the letter of the Constitution? How would political leaders, who had spent all of their political careers in a position of permanent opposition, react once entrusted with political power? But the issue which, in 1920, seemed to pose the greatest threat to responsible government, was that which centred around the future relationship between ministers and their permanent subordinates. Was it possible for the two sides to find a "modus vivendi"? The first two decades of the twentieth century had been particularly bitter. Heads of Departments had, in 1903, openly welcomed the demise of representative government. More threatening, at this late stage, were their efforts to block the process towards responsible government. Now that they were to be stripped of political power would they gracefully accept to play the role of the trusted adviser? More to the point would the political office holder take them into his confidence or would he prefer to appoint others to advise him? Would responsible government lead to a reduction in the number to retrenchment?

We shall seek to answer these question in the following Chapter where the impact of responsible government on the Malta Civil Service will be the principal theme.

It is sufficient to observe, at this stage, that the omens did not look particularly encouraging. For over ninety years Britain had tried, but failed, to effect reform or retrenchment in the Maltese public service. We have examined some of these attempts in this and earlier Chapters. Governors, Heads of Departments, local politicians and ordinary public servants all seemed to share some responsibility for these failures. What seems significant is, that these failures had come about despite the endless number of crises, Commissions, Committees, calls for economy in the administration and the general poverty of the Islands. The ability of public servants to play one side against the other, the government against the opposition, had in the past proved to be a contributing factor for this failure. But, as we saw above, in the 1900-1920 period civil servants appeared less sure of their position and apprehensive about their future, to the extent, that they felt the need to organize themselves in trade unions in order to defend their interests. Whatever the real cause, however, in 1921 Britain had apparently exhausted all but one of its options, i.e. responsible government. Colonial Office officials decided that it was time to risk it.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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3. Ibid., p.10.
4. Ibid., pp.10-11; and Rundle to Crewe, 19 May 1910, C.O.158/366, PRO, Kew, London.
5. For a detailed study of the conditions prevailing in Malta in 1919, see M.A. Sant, (1989), "Sette Giugno" 1919. Tqanqil u Tibdil, Sensiela Kotba Socjalisti, Senglea, Malta



6. This view was, in fact, stated rather emphatically by Goffredo Mattei, an elected member of Council, in a letter to Col Seely at the Colonial Office. Mattei to Seely, Dec. 1910, C.O.158/369, PRO, Kew, London.
7. Harcourt to Royal Commissioners, Instructions, 17 Aug. 1911, C.O.883/7, PRO, Kew, London.
8. H. Pelling, (1963), A History of British Trade Unionism, Penguin Books, Middlesex, UK, p.160.
9. All of these contributed, as we shall see below, to the decision to grant Malta a qualified form of responsible government. However, as the riots were a result of the economic situation prevailing in Malta it is fair to state that the latter proved to be the decisive factor.
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31. Malta Blue Book of 1903.
32. Rundle to Crewe, 24 Apr. 1910, C.O.883/7, PRO, Kew, London.
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34. Ibid., p.11.
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39. Ibid.
40. Crewe to Rundle, 7 Jun. 1910, C.O.158/366, PRO, Kew, London.
41. Rundle to Crewe, 17 Jun. 1910, C.O.158/366, PRO, Kew, London.
42. Grenfell to Chamberlain, 3 May 1901, C.O.158/336, PRO, Kew, London.
43. Grenfell to Chamberlain, 3 Jul. 1901, C.O.158/337, PRO, Kew, London.
44. Rundle to Crewe, 17 Jun. 1910, C.O.158/366, PRO, Kew, London.
45. Cox min. on Rundle to Crewe, 19 May 1910, C.O.158/366, PRO, Kew, London.
46. A.V. Laferla, op.cit., Vol.II, p.159.
47. See Notes by Lord Onslow following his visit to Malta, Dec. 1901, C.O.158/343, PRO, Kew, London.
48. F. Azzopardi to Cox, 9 Apr. 1910, C.O.158/369, PRO, Kew, London.
49. Cox min. on question of transferring Merewether from Malta, 19 Oct. 1910, C.O.158/370, PRO, Kew, London.
50. Wingfield min. on Office of Lt Governor, 25 Oct. 1910, as above.
51. Ibid.
52. We saw in Chapter Ten, that the office of Lt Governor was created in 1884 following representations from political leaders to the Colonial Office and to Penrose Julyan.
53. Cox min. on Azzopardi to Cox, 9 Apr. 1910, C.O.158/369, PRO, Kew, London.
54. Rundle to Harcourt, 31 Mar. 1911, C.O.158/370, PRO, Kew, London.

55. Ibid.
56. Colonial Office mins. on Report of Finance Committee enclosed with Rundle to Harcourt, as above.
57. Ibid.
58. Harcourt to Rundle, 31 Mar. 1911, C.O.158/370, PRO, Kew, London.
59. Rundle to Harcourt, 7 Jun. 1911, C.O.158/371.
60. Harcourt to Royal Commissioners, Instructions, 11 Aug. 1911, C.O.883/7, PRO, Kew, London.
61. Report of the Royal Commission...1911-12, op.cit., p.12.
62. Ibid., p.12.
63. Ibid., p.13.
64. T. Balogh & D. Seers, (1955), Economic Problems of Malta, Govt. Printing Press, Malta.
65. Report of the Royal Commission...1911-12, op.cit., pp.27-28.
66. In 1901 British residents in Malta had won the right to have their case conducted in their own language. The Maltese had, as yet, no such right mainly because the Nazionalisti had continued to oppose its introduction. Hence, native Maltese were forced to use Italian in any court case in which they happened to be involved.
67. Report of the Royal Commission...1911-12, op.cit., p.16.
68. Mowatt to Harcourt, 22 Nov. 1911, C.O.158/373, PRO, Kew, London.
69. Report of the Royal Commission...1911-12, op.cit., p.13.
70. Harcourt to Mowatt, 4 Dec. 1911, C.O.158/373.
71. Report of the Royal Commission...1911-12, op.cit., p.14.
72. See evidence of Castaldi to Royal Commission of 1911-12 in Mins. of Evidence, Cd-6280, HMSO, London, p.12.
73. A.V. Laferla, op.cit., Vol.II, p.183.
74. Mattei to Royal Commission, Mins. of Evidence, Cd-6280, HMSO, London, p.11.
75. Mattei to Sely, Dec. 1910, C.O.158/369, PRO, Kew, London.
76. Mattei to Royal Commission as in Note 74 above.
77. Muscat to Royal Commission, Mins. of Evidence, p.12.
78. Azzopardi to Royal Commission, ibid., p.11.
79. Castaldi to Royal Commission, ibid., as in Note 72 above.

80. Caruana Gatto to Royal Commission, *ibid.*, p.13.
81. Report of the Committee into the Expenditure of the Government of Malta and the Organization of the Government Departments, 3 Jan. 1913, printed in Malta Govt. Gazette, No.5544 (Supplement), 14 Mar. 1913, pp.I-II.
82. *Ibid.*, pp.II-III.
83. *Ibid.*, pp.III-IV.
84. *Ibid.*, p.IV.
85. *Ibid.*, p.IV.
86. *Ibid.*, p.IV.
87. *Ibid.*, p.V.
88. *Ibid.*, p.VI.
89. *Ibid.*, p.VI.
90. Harcourt to Rundle, 14 Mar. 1913, C.O.158/377, PRO, Kew, London.
91. A. Mercieca, (1969), *The Making and Unmaking of a Maltese Chief Justice*, G. Muscat & Co, Valletta, p.103.
92. Malta Chronicle, 15 Feb. 1913, National Lib., Valletta.
93. Malta Times, 27 Feb. 1913, National Lib., Valletta.
94. Grenfell to chamberlain, 7 Nov. 1901, C.O.158/338, PRO, Kew, London.
95. Grenfell to Chamberlain, 6 Mar. 1902, C.O.158/341.
96. Grenfell to Chamberlain, 7 Nov. 1901, C.O.158/338, PRO, Kew, London.
97. Grey to Stuart, 22 Dec. 1846, C.O.158/135, PRO, Kew, London.
98. We have seen, in previous Chapters, accusations being made against the government of favouritism. The reader would recall the attacks of the elected members against Strickland who was accused of promoting only those who supported the government.
99. Although elected members tended to complain against Governors who adhered strictly to seniority they also tended to lambast Governors who did not.
100. A.V. Laferla, *op.cit.*, Vol.II, p.183.
101. A. Mercieca, *op.cit.*, p.103.
102. G.A. Pirotta, "The Growth of British Trade Unionism Under British Colonialism - A Comparative Study", in *Economic and Social Studies*, (New Series), Vol.I, 1983.
103. E. Dobie, (1967), *Malta's Road to Independence*, Univ. of Oklahoma Press, Oklahoma, USA, pp.80-81.

104. G.A. Pirotta, op.cit.
105. Grenfell to Chamberlain, 13 Feb. 1900, C.O.158/332, PRO, Kew, London.
106. Ibid.
107. J. Attard, (1984), Industrial Relations in Malta, PEG Pubs., Hamrun, Malta, p.5.
108. E. Dobie, op.cit., pp.81-82.
109. E.W. Cohen, (1941), The Growth of the British Civil Service. 1780-1939, Allen & Unwin, London, p.184.
110. Ibid.
111. G. Macaulay Trevelyan, (1937), (2nd ed), British History in the Nineteenth Century and After (1782-1919), Longmans, Green & Co, London, p.479.
112. E.W. Cohen, op.cit., p.185.
113. Ibid., p.186.
114. A.V. Laferla, op.cit., p.209.
115. Ibid.
116. During the Great War Malta served as a major military hospital for the whole of the Mediterranean region while the dockyards worked ceaselessly to maintain allied shipping in fighting condition. Maltese regiments and recruits fought in Gallipoli and in France.
117. Metheun to Long, 9 Oct. 1918, C.O.158/406, PRO, Kew, London.
118. Blair Acting Governor to Clerks, 26 Oct. 1918, C.O.158/406, PRO, Kew, London.
119. Memo by Clerks drawn up on 17 Sept. 1918, encl. in Metheun to Long, 9 Oct. 1918, C.O.158/406, PRO, Kew, London.
120. Each of the six clerks involved rose to the highest ranks of the Maltese Public Service while one of them, Hannibal P. Scicluna (later Sir), became a distinguished literary figure.
121. Metheun to Long, 9 Oct. 1918, C.O.158/406, PRO, Kew, London.
122. Memo by clerks to Blair, 2 Nov. 1918, encl. in Blair to Long, 22 Nov. 1918, C.O.158/406, PRO, Kew, London.
123. Ibid.
124. Ibid.
125. Ibid.
126. H. Frendo, op.cit., p.167.
127. Ibid., pp.167-168.

128. Ibid., p.168.
129. Ibid., p.168.
130. Metheun to Long, 1 Jun. 1918, C.O.158/404, PRO, Kew, London.
131. Metheun to Long, 14 Mar. 1919, C.O.158/408, PRO, Kew, London.
132. A.V. Laferla, op.cit., Vol.II, p.220.
133. Metheun to Milner, 17 Jan. 1919, C.O.158/408, PRO, Kew, London.
134. Colonial Office mins. on Increase in Salaries of Heads of Departments, 21 Feb. 1919 - 28 Mar. 1919, C.O.158/408, PRO, Kew, London.
135. Methuen to Milner, 6 Mar. 1919, C.O.158/408, PRO, Kew, London.
136. Ibid.
137. Flood min. on Metheun to Milner, 17 Jan. 1919, C.O.158/408, PRO, Kew, London.
138. Memorandum from the clerical Establishments of the Malta Civil Service, 2 Sept. 1919, encl. in Plumer to Milner, 4 Sept. 1919, C.O.158/411, PRO, Kew, London.
139. Voce del Popolo, 5 Mar. 1919, encl. in Metheun to Milner, 10 Apr. 1919, C.O.158/409, PRO, Kew, London.
140. Ibid.
141. H. Frendo, op.cit., p.171.
142. Blair, Acting Governor, to Milner, 31 May 1919, C.O.158/409, PRO, Kew, London.
143. Address by President of Malta Civil Service Association, 20 May 1919, encl. with Blair to Milner as above Note.
144. J. Attard, op.cit., p.5.
145. Ibid., p.6.
146. Blair to Milner, 31 May 1919, C.O.158/409, PRO, Kew, London.
147. Ibid.
148. Colonial Office mins. on Blair to Milner as in Note 146.
149. E. Dobie, op.cit., p.74.
150. H. Frendo, op.cit., p.170.
151. Malta has 5 national holidays, the 7th June being one. A monument to those who fell in the riots stands in front of what used to be the Governor's Palace, in Valletta.
152. Blair to Milner, 13 Jun. 1919, C.O.158/409, PRO, Kew, London.
153. Colonial Office mins. on Metheun to Milner, 14 Mar. 1919, C.O.158/408,

PRO, Kew, London.

154. Ibid.

155. Ibid.

156. Memo Robertson (Lt Governor) to Metheun, encl. in Metheun to Milner, 21 Apr. 1919, C.O.158/409, PRO, Kew, London.

157. Bonavia Ass. Sec to Government, to Governor, 11 Aug. 1919, C.O.158/411, PRO, Kew, London.

158. Plumer to Milner, 19 Sept. 1919, C.O.883/7 and C.O.158/411, PRO, Kew, London.

159. Address by President as in Note 143 above.

160. H. Frendo, op.cit., pp.163-165.

161. Mizzi spared no organization from his virulent attacks if it dared adopted English or Maltese as its working language.

162. Plumer to Milner, 25 Aug. 1919, C.O.158/411, PRO, London.

163. Ibid.

164. Colonial Office mins. on Plumer to Milner as in above Note.

165. Ibid.

166. Ibid.

167. Payne to Milner, 25 Sept 1919, C.O.158/415, PRO, Kew, London.

168. Plumer to Milner, 4 Sept. 1919, C.O.158/411, PRO, Kew, London.

169. Report of the Committee Appointed for the Revision of Salaries of Government Employes, 25 Nov. 1919, C.O.158/427.

170. Ibid.

171. Memo from Clerical Establishment, 2 Sept. 1919, C.O.158/415, and C.O.158/411, PRO, Kew, London.

172. Plumer to Milner, 31 Dec. 1919, C.O.158/413, PRO, Kew, London.

173. Ibid.

174. A.V. Laferla, op.cit., Vol.II, p.226.

175. Payne to Permanent Secretary, Colonial Office, 4 Feb. 1920, C.O.158/422, PRO, Kew, London.

176. Plumer to Milner, 29 Apr. 1920, C.O.158/417, PRO, Kew, London.

177. Robertson to Milner, 14 Oct. 1920, C.O.158/420, PRO, Kew, London.

178. Payne to Perm. Sec., Colonial Office, 4 Feb. 1920, C.O.158/422, PRO, Kew, London.

179. Plumer to Milner as in Note 176.

180. Plumer to Milner, 27 Dec. 1920, C.O.158/420; and Churchill to Plumer, 2 Feb. 1921, C.O.158/423, PRO, Kew, London, are two examples.

181. Address by elected members, encl. in Plumer to Milner, 29 May 1920, C.O.158/417, PRO, Kew, London.

182. Letter from elected members to Milner, encl. in Plumer to Milner, 9 Aug. 1920, C.O.158/419, PRO, Kew, London.

183. Colonial Office mins. on Plumer to Milner, 29 Apr. 1920, C.O.158/417, PRO, Kew, London.

184. Dir. of Naval Intelligence to Amery, 9 Feb. 1920, C.O.158/421, PRO, Kew, London.

185. See, for example, National Union of Teachers to Milner, 11 Jan 1921, C.O.158/421; and Amery to Plumer, 15 Mar. 1921, C.O.158/423, PRO, Kew, London.



## CHAPTER TWELVE

### RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT AND AFTER: 1921-1940

The announcement that Malta was finally to have self-government 'sparked off an explosion of popular enthusiasm in the streets and squares'[1] of Valletta while bands played and crowds cheered Lord Plumer, the Governor. The feeling in both Malta and London was one of optimism, that a new era in Anglo-Maltese relations was about to begin. It was Amery, the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, who finally convinced a reluctant Britain to grant Malta a qualified form of responsible government. Amery had written, following a visit to Malta, that

'we must give up thinking of Malta as a curious little old-world dependency, living on the outskirts of a British fortress and providing cheap labour for a British dockyard.'[2]

Instead, it was time that the British came to regard the Maltese, 'in a very direct and intimate sense', as their fellow citizens and fellow countrymen.

It proved to be, however, a misplaced optimism for, by 1930, responsible government in Malta was clearly moribund, afflicted with internal dissensions and external, real or imagined, threats to the security of the fortress. In the first instance three of the political parties which contested the 1921 elections, the first to be held under self-government, represented all the old divisions which were present in Maltese society, both in terms of personalities and policies, but especially language. One party, Il Partito Democratico Nazionalista (PDN), led by Enrico Mizzi, was staunchly pro-Italian and anti-English. Another, L'Unione Politica Maltese (UPM), led by a cleric, Panzavecchia, was the party of the church and though pro-Italian was moderate in its opposition to English. The third party was the fervently pro-English Constitutional Party, which was led by Sir Gerald Strickland, a former Chief Secretary of Malta and former Governor of Queensland, Australia. There was a fourth party, the Labour Party, which was under the leadership of Col William

Savona, Sigismondo Savona's son.[3] This party was, in terms of language, pro-English but its stance, unlike that of the Constitutionlists, was clearly more utilitarian than ideological. Labour leaders wanted English to be given greater importance than Italian in education, as they thought the former to be of more benefit to workers seeking employment. Over the next decade or so no quarter was to be conceded by these parties in their struggle to prevail over each other and by 1930 party political conflict had reached its climax. The Constitution was suspended and, in the following year a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the political affairs of Malta.[4] As it turned out, self-government not only failed to repay the early optimism displayed by all parties, but proved to be an anti-climax for, instead of propelling Malta towards dominion status, it served to revert the Island to the position of a Crown Colony.

Language, as we shall see, inevitably played its part in this retrogression. The rise of Fascism in Italy, after 1925, and its leader's frequent reference to Malta as constituting part of "Italia irredenta" and his claim to the Mediterranean as Italy's "mare nostrum", [5] tended to make Britain increasingly nervous about Italian influence in Malta. Even before this time, however, an untrusting Britain had inserted, in the 1921 responsible government Constitution, provisions in favour of the English language. Thus, according to the Constitution, English was to be the official language of administration and nothing was to be allowed to undermine its position. Enrico Mizzi, whose admiration for all things Italian was undisputedly greater than that of his father, never reconciled himself to these provisions and, in 1932, as Minister of Education, sought to restore the Italian language to a parity in status with English. His determination to carry on with his policy, despite warnings to the contrary from London, resulted, in 1933, in the Constitution being once again suspended.[6] The final blow was delivered by the Imperial Government in 1936 when legislation was passed formally annulling the Letters Patent of

1921.[7] Malta reverted, once again, to a colonial administrative form of rule until 1947, when "self-government" was once more restored.

Whether the issue was party conflict or the language question, as in the past, the Maltese public service could not, and did not, emerge unscathed. In this Chapter we shall first examine the impact of responsible government on the civil service, and later, the changes that came with the resurgence of the language question and the withdrawal of the Constitution in the period 1933-1940. In this latter period internal conflicts were overtaken by external and more dangerous events. By 1935 Malta had drifted into an undeclared state of emergency. Mock air raids and practice blackouts became a part of life. The Italian language was pronounced "lingua non grata" and Italian influence in Malta was attacked with vigor and resolve. Public servants, known for their pro-Italian sympathies were dismissed from the public service and British officers were brought in to supervise the civil service. When war broke out others, including high-ranking officials, were arrested, interned and finally deported.

With respect to the first theme we have already seen in the previous Chapter that, on the eve of responsible government, relations between the bureaucracy and Maltese political leaders were particularly strained. Self-government implied a transfer of authority, power and influence from the bureaucracy to elected politicians, responsible to a legislature and an electorate. It meant in the final analysis an exchange of roles. Wherever this had taken place, or was about to happen, it was not entirely welcome among civil servants. Writing of the transition to self-government in India, Philip Mason observes that the period in question provided 'a strange and unexpected test for the caste of Guardians', who up till then, 'had ruled this Platonic empire. They had come to a world in which they had been unquestioned masters... Now they breathed a harsher air.'[8] Henceforth, 'they must give advice instead of orders, and they met constant opposition, slander and abuse.'

In Malta too, the imminent transfer of power from the bureaucracy to

ministers gave rise to fears and uncertainties among many public servants, some of which have already been discussed. Nonetheless, we shall see further on that, by and large, these fears were to prove greatly exaggerated. One reason for this, perhaps the most important, was that once party competition intensified, political parties shifted their main focus from the public service to their opponents in the political field. The interest that remained was generally concerned with appointments and promotions since parties in opposition feared the negative effect that political patronage, by the party in government, might have on their share of the vote at election time. Thus, gradually, interest in the public service was to become secondary. Even here, it must be said, the titanic clash between bureaucrats and ministers, the old and the new power brokers, which political conditions in Malta on the eve of responsible government might have been expected to produce under the new system, never materialized.

It was, however, not necessary that Malta should have self-government for Maltese civil servants to breathe the harsher air or to experience abuse. Indeed, as Amery had discovered for himself on a visit to the Island in 1919, the abuse to which senior civil servants had been subjected to over the years had completely broken their morale. He had gone out to Malta to investigate its economic and financial situation but had come away convinced that nothing short of (qualified) self-government would answer the political problems of this Crown, cum fortress, colony. The stage had been reached, in his view, when it was no longer advantageous to continue to entrust the administration in the hands of a bureaucracy composed, almost entirely, of Maltese. These local officials were, at least nominally, under the control of the Secretary of State and ultimately responsible to him alone. They were not, in any real sense, politically responsible to the people over whom they governed. This was resented by local politicians who, pressing for self-government, saw in these local

bureaucrats a major obstacle to their political aspirations. Their response, therefore, was to assail the bureaucracy by every means, attacking its policies, its measures, its intentions and, not infrequently, the personal character and integrity of its members, aiming finally to paralyse the whole administration. The success of their strategy was confirmed by Amery. 'The Government of Malta', he wrote,

'inspires no confidence either in the public or its own members. There might be something to be said for an autocratic government run entirely by keen active English officials in every department, reforming the Maltese in spite of themselves, and raising such taxes as seemed good to it. But the present administration is almost entirely in the hands of the Maltese. Without any disparagement of a body of efficient and honourable public servants, it is necessary to admit that, collectively, they have neither the means nor the temperament to cope with the reckless and irresponsible criticism to which they are subjected and are naturally reluctant to venture on any measure which may provide a fresh outcry. Bureaucratic government under such conditions inevitably tends to be timid and furtive and the most able and vigorous government can do little to infuse permanent life into the machine.' [9]

No Commissioner, Governor or visitor to Malta had, until then, so skillfully and concisely expressed, as Amery had done, the predicament in which the Maltese civil service had found itself by virtue of being almost entirely indigenous and by having to carry on the administration under conditions of near autocracy.

#### THE CIVIL SERVICE UNDER RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

George Cornwall Lewis has observed that a self-governing colony was a contradiction in terms.[10] This view was not shared by Lord Durham. In the 1840s, while inquiring into the political affairs of Canada, Durham had concluded that it was possible to create a political administration which would concede to the Canadians their demand for responsible government while at the same time allowing Britain to continue to exercise its imperial authority, albeit over a restricted sphere of Canadian affairs, such as trade, foreign relations and crown lands.[11] This meant, in practice, the contemporaneous existence, within and over the affairs of one state, of two distinct authorities - the local and the imperial - each with its own distinct and defined sphere and method of action. The dyarchical

principle to which this view gave rise found practical expression, after 1918, in India and in the Malta Constitution of 1921, which was enacted by Letters Patent 14 April 1921.[12]

The aim in Malta was to give to the Maltese as great a control over their 'purely'[13] domestic affairs as was consistent with the interests of the fortress and the colonial authorities.[14] This gave rise to a constitution which Austin has described as 'certainly a complicated one' and in which 'there had been no lack of ingenuity on the part of the Imperial Government in its attempts to minimise'[15] its operation.

'Every device known to the Colonial Office had been introduced - a qualified franchise, an elected Assembly, a partly elected, partly appointed Senate, ministerial committees, a privy council, a local court of appeal, reserved powers for the Governor, and a careful division between Imperial and local matters: a splendid array of constitutional structures devised by legal officers and approved by the Maltese leaders themselves.'

Hence, in Malta as in India, dyarchy was intended to hand 'over the steering-wheel' while retaining in colonial hands 'control over the accelerator and the brake.'[16]

Under the 1921 Constitution, as Cremona rightly points out, control of the Island was divided between two governments, the Maltese Imperial Government and the Maltese Government.[17] The former was to be under the direction of the Governor, but subject to instructions from London. He was to be assisted by a Nominated Council made up of the Lt Governor and the Legal Adviser, (the latter yet to be appointed), as ex-officio members, and a representative from each branch of the armed forces. This side of the dyarchy was to deal with all matters, such as trade, immigration, defence, foreign relations and telecommunications, which under the new Constitution were "reserved" to the Imperial Government. The Maltese Government, the other side of the dyarchy, was to be headed by an Executive Council or responsible ministry (consisting of six ministries inclusive of that of Head of Ministry), which was to be responsible to a popularly elected Legislative Assembly (32 members) and a Senate (17 members) elected by corporate bodies, such as the Church and the Unions, and by electors

possessing certain special qualifications. Elections were to be held every three years. In cases of conflict between the local and imperial authorities the matters under dispute were to be referred to the Privy Council, consisting of the Executive Council and the Nominated Council sitting in joint session, or to the Joint Committee of the Privy Council consisting of six members, three from each side.

English, as already observed, was to be the official language of administration but without prejudice to the use of Italian, the 'official language of legal record and of culture'. Debates in the legislature were to be conducted in these languages and Maltese. English and Italian were to be recognized as equal languages of culture in education, but from the higher classes of the elementary schools onwards. Enrico Mizzi, the pro-Italian clergy and the Chamber of Advocates were opposed to these articles in the Constitution and urged that knowledge of English and Italian should be made a qualification for membership in the legislature. They hoped in this way to effectively bar members of a nascent labour movement from standing as electoral candidates at the forthcoming elections.[18] Not surprisingly, therefore, the retention of Maltese was stressed by the Imperial Government Workers Union at the dockyard whose members were said, by naval intelligence, to be well-disposed towards Britain.

The Letters Patent also took care of some of the outstanding issues regarding the public service. Public servants, as was demonstrated in the previous Chapter, expected the new government to cut salaries and to take, generally, a high-handed approach towards them. There were on the face of it strong grounds for such alarm. Sir Arturo Mercieca, the Crown Advocate since 1915, a staunch pro-Italian who, before his appointment, had stood and was elected as a candidate for the "Nazionalisti", recalled in his memoirs the attitude adopted by the elected members towards the official side on the Council. 'Emboldened' he writes,

'as they were by the assurance of having soon all powers in their own hands, their pugnacity waxed the more fierce when dissension arose in the debates.'[19]

On one occasion the elected members not only indulged 'in unrestrained invective against government', but refused to withdraw some of their offensive accusations when asked to do so by the presiding officer. Mercieca also recalls another incident when 'the speeches of the elected members...degenerated, at times, into unjustified vulgarity.' This behaviour brought about a change of heart at the Colonial Office. London abandoned its earlier reticence to bind, insofar as existing public service salaries and conditions were concerned, the new government about to be elected under the 1921 Constitution. Thus, the new Letters Patent clearly stipulated that, while the power to appoint and remove public officers, after the coming into force of the Constitution, was to be vested in the Governor in Council, 'no public officer in the Island who shall have been appointed to his office before the date of the commencement'[20] of the Letters Patent,

'shall be removed from his office or have his emoluments reduced save in accordance with the laws, regulations or conditions subject to which he was appointed to such office.'

This applied to Judges too, although in their case they could be removed, by the Governor in Council, on grounds of proven misconduct or incapacity, after an address from the Senate and the Legislative Assembly. A Judge's salary, prescribed by law, was not however, to be diminished during his tenure of office.

The general elections under the new Constitution were held in early October 1921 with all four parties contesting. The only thing remarkable about them was the intense party passions and the violence which characterised them. When the votes were counted Mizzi's PND had won only four of the thirty-two seats, all from the Gozo constituency. The LP won seven, Strickland's CP seven and Panzavecchia's UPM, fourteen seats.[21]

The new government was inaugurated with great ceremony by the Prince



of Wales on November 2, 1921. As Labour at first refused the UPM's offer of a coalition the latter were forced to go it alone as a minority government, with Joseph Howard, a local businessman, as Head of Ministry.[22] In accordance with the Constitution he appointed five of his colleagues as ministers, namely of Justice, Education, Public Works (including electricity, water works and public transport), Commerce and Agriculture, and Health, reserving for himself the Ministry of Finance. It was soon clear that the invective, misrepresentations and personal abuse that had characterised the first election contest were also to characterise the debates of both the Legislative Assembly and the Senate. The Lt Governor reported, at one stage, that

'no question was too trivial to serve as a pretext...to hurl at ministers irritating charges of incompetence, maladministration and deliberate dishonesty.'[23]

The public service tended to figure prominently during these attacks. There was the personal or career interests of party sympathisers to defend and political patronage to expose.

In a small community such as that of Malta the political sympathies of individuals and of whole families are, if not perfectly known to others, suspected. It was, therefore, not unusual for the names of public servants either to crop up during political debates, or to form the subject of those debates. A few examples would probably be sufficient to demonstrate this point. There is the case of Mr Borg and Mr Cachia, two teachers who, suffering from the same medical condition, had applied to their minister for special permission to travel to England to undergo treatment there.[24] The former's request was immediately acceded to, his personal physician's medical certificate being accepted as sufficient evidence of his illness. Not so in Mr Cachia's case, who was subjected to a medical board which reported immediately after the vessel on which he was booked had sailed. The matter, no doubt on Cachia's own urging, was brought up in the Chamber during Question Time. It was alleged by the opposition that the different

treatment meted out to Borg and Cachia was explained by the fact, that the former was a "Panzavecchjan", i.e. a supporter of the party in government, while the latter was a "Stricklandjan", and hence, politically opposed to the Government. Of course, the minister denied the accusation but failed to provide a satisfactory explanation for his actions.[25] On another occasion, while a discussion on the administrative affairs of Gozo was underway in the Chamber, the Head of Ministry, (the British had purposely refused to allow the designation Prime Minister to be used[26]), denounced the Assistant-Secretary to Government for Gozo as a die-hard supporter of Strickland.[27] Some time later it was Strickland's turn to make accusations, describing a particular civil servant as 'one of the hottest supporters of the Panzavecchian Party and one of the most rabid opponents of what the Constitutional Party stands for.'[28] As political competition increased, accusations of this kind about individual civil servants merely became more frequent, flung across the floor of the Chamber by opposing speakers and elaborated on in opposing newspapers. No doubt, the information came from public servants who, either harboured some personal grievance against their political heads, or wished to ingratiate themselves with the opposition. Opposition parties tended to welcome information which could be employed to harass or embarrass ministers but, once in government, they usually found themselves the object of similar tactics. To a large degree these goings-on seem to lend support to Sutton's view that in very small states 'anonymity is not possible and that pressure towards partisanship are all too palatable.'[29]

The Borg-Cachia case, because it occurred very early in the life of the new legislature, served to generate debate about the political activities of public servants generally. Some members of the legislature, but notably those on the government side, had complained that public servants seemed to dedicate more of their time and energies to partisan political activities than to their duties. They claimed that, public

servants who were truly devoted to their duties would so concentrate on them, that they would have less time for political activities.[30] But the feeling, generally, was, that it would be a mistake for the government to try either to discover the political inclinations of its servants or to unnecessarily restrict their freedom to indulge in such activities. One member, however, took the matter to its extreme. In the past, he claimed, the prohibition on political activities imposed on civil servants by the Colonial Regulations had been applied with great laxity and that under the new system of government these regulations had ceased to have any binding force.[31] He maintained, furthermore, that 'it ought to be the duty of Civil Servants to see that...with the changed conditions, they should cease to apply.' The views expressed in this debate bear witness not only to the influence, as electors, that civil servants enjoyed in the political process, but also to the fact that, in a polity where at least 75% of the population were illiterate, their exclusion as party activists would have severely limited the number of educated party organizers on whom political parties could depend.

Of greater concern to parties in opposition was the fear of political patronage by their opponents in government. Political leaders on every side were fully aware of the political advantages that patronage offered to a government which was prepared to exploit to the full the opportunities that came its way. In the past, political leaders had strenuously opposed the local government's tendency to appoint elected members of Council to public offices seeing, in this 'unwise and detestable policy',[32] an attempt by the authorities 'to entice Elected Members to come to its support' by holding out to them 'prospects of private advantage.' This, they had argued, was intended to throw discredit on the elected side of the Council as those coming forward at election time were often said to be actuated by a desire to advance their own private interests rather than those of the people. The government, however, had refused to bind itself on this issue,

arguing that it must remain free to appoint from among individuals who, as elected members, had given public proof of their fitness for public office. It was entirely in the hands of the latter to accept or reject the offer of public office.[33] The response of the leaders of the political factions existing at the time was to require candidates, contesting under their name, to make a public declaration that, if elected, they would not accept public office.[34] But, in the end, few elected members felt inclined to reject the government's offer of secure employment.[35]

It was, perhaps, this familiarity with the impact that political patronage could have on the political fortunes of parties that partly explains why, in 1920-21, no political party had publicly advocated the introduction of a spoils system for public offices in Malta. Of course, the 1921 Constitution specifically prohibited the removal from office of any public servant, but in the discussions that had taken place prior to the promulgation of the Constitution, the very idea of a spoils system was not even raised.[36] This was not true of Canada, for example, where political parties for a time appeared to favour the system of spoils which was then prevalent in the US[37] In the case of Malta an examination of the views expressed over the years by the elected members of Council, both in public and before visiting Commissions, shows that their public position throughout had been that only the best should be attracted to the service and that this end could only be secured if recruitment and promotion were based on merit.[38] Hence, to a large degree, their preference was for the British system in which civil servants' tenure depended on "good behaviour" rather than "at pleasure", or the stability of the government. For the administration in Malta this had one significant advantage: it gave it a stability and continuity which would otherwise not have been possible. According to the 1921 Constitution, unless otherwise required, general elections in Malta were to be held every three years.[39] This meant, in practice, that under a spoils system frequent changes in government would

have resulted in grave administrative disruption and discontinuity.

But political patronage can never be completely eliminated, especially in Malta where the people demanded paternal government. Party government was not expected to result in a reduction of the services provided by the government, but in an improvement in their quality, if not their extension. As it happened, the intense party struggle for power which took place after 1921, resulted ultimately in every political party promising greater or wider government commitment in education, social services and employment.[40] Even in the period 1921-24 when, in view of the financial difficulties facing the Islands economy was the watchword of the government, some of the measures adopted by the latter involved appointing new officers. The "Eight Hours Act of 1922" involved, for example, the appointment of factory inspectors and, eventually, the creation of a Department of Labour.[41] The unemployment problem - more than 30% of the working population were unemployed - gave rise to a new Department of Emigration,[42] while the misnamed "Compulsory School Act of 1924" resulted in the appointment of new teachers.[43] Government efforts to bolster its revenue by the creation of a Lottery Department had similar consequences. The government also found that the workload in the departments made it necessary to create a new class of clerks (designated auxilliary), and to recruit clerical assistants, stenographers and clerk typists.[44] Thus, although the Governor had reported, in 1924, that ministers had 'endeavoured', and 'to some extent succeeded', in effecting economies in the administrative services',[45] opportunities for political patronage were not lacking. In later years the pretext of economy was to be dropped completely. On the eve of the 1927 election the Governor reported that Government ministers, sensing defeat, had employed several hundred labourers with the public service.[46]

It must also be said that, in the period 1921-1936, neither the UPM, nor the CP or the PN, all of which had been in government at one time or

another, had done away with the channels for patronage which they had inherited from the Imperial Government. Thus, for instance, they had retained nomination as an essential pre-condition for candidates wishing to compete for offices in the civil service.[47] Furthermore, when merit, as a criteria for promotion, was not based on some objective test system such as examinations, it gave rise to abuse. In May 1922, merely six months after the establishment of self-government, a motion was brought before the Legislative Assembly in which the government was accused of having

'committed abuses in reference to promotions, transfers, payment of salaries and management of the Civil Service.'[48]

The government, as might be expected, strenuously denied the charges but its case, that all promotions had been based on merit, was shredded by a well-briefed opposition. It did, however, survive the vote, but thanks mainly, to the decision of some labour members who decided to abstain rather than assist in bringing down the government so early under the new Constitution. But, no matter which party was in government, distrust remained. This is clearly demonstrated by the frequent use made of Question Time, by members of the Legislature, to interrogate ministers on appointments, promotions and transfers in the public service.

The above discussion shows that civil service fears of party government had, in the end, proved to be grossly exaggerated. Most civil servants, it seems, had lost sight of the fact that, as under past Constitutions, they continued to form a significant proportion of the electorate and, therefore, no political party which was serious in its aim of forming the next government could afford to antagonize them as a body.[49] This was made particularly pressing by the fact that the electoral system adopted in Malta, in 1921, was that of proportional representation[50] which, even then, was known to favour the preferences of subgroups and minorities. Not surprisingly, therefore, election contests tended to be characterised by attempts, on the part of every political party, to secure for themselves the vote of public service members. At

times these attempts amounted to nothing more than vague promises, notably of better conditions, but some specific promises were also made, such as the pledge to introduce a Widows and Orphans Scheme for the dependants of deceased public servants,[51] of a new Pension Act for civil servants themselves,[52] and to study the possibility of the setting up of Whitley Councils.[53] The first two measures were eventually implemented under different ministries, but the third was not introduced until 1950.[54] Maltese politicians were also aware that, because of their inexperience they could not hope, if elected, to govern efficiently without the whole hearted support of the civil service. This, perhaps, explains why after the introduction of self-government the expected witch hunt against senior civil servants never materialised. Instead, some of them had their status raised as in the case of Bonavia who, until 1919, was an outspoken opponent of party government, but was later elevated to the office of Head of the Civil Service under Self-Government.[55] There were, indeed, clashes, but these concerned mostly incidents between individual ministers and individual public servants. There was, for example, the case of a water works employee who was fined two days wages by the minister for refusing to reconnect the water supply of a subscriber who was in arrears in his payments to the department.[56] Or the case of the policeman who was allegedly struck by a minister for failing to carry out an order to stop a demonstration against the government from taking place.[57] But such clashes cannot be put down to antagonism to the public service.

Of a more serious nature were those clashes between government and opposition which in one way or another embroiled the public service. Between 1921 and 1933 the police and the judiciary were the two sectors which very often found themselves entangled in these quarrels. In 1924, following their victory at the polls, PN ministers, on the pretext of obtaining evidence of bribery, ordered the police to search the offices of Strickland's Constitutional Party. The latter returned the courtesy in 1927

when it had the homes of the outgoing Prime Minister, of the Secretary of the Nationalist Party and of his fiancée searched by the police, ostensibly for the purpose of recovering some missing government files.[58] The party in government also resorted to the police in order to harass its opponents or obstruct their political activities.[59] The local police force had never really been an efficient or effective body, but after the 1919 riots, efforts were made to strengthen it.[60] The improvements made, however, were lost under party government as ministers strove to recruit persons on whose personal loyalty they could depend. These appointed saw their role, therefore, not as public servants, but as ministerial henchmen.[61] Opponents of the government, in their turn, threatened these officers, making it clear to them that, once their party was in office, they would be dismissed. [62] It was because of this state of affairs that the Royal Commission of 1931, which was sent out to Malta to reappraise the working of responsible government there, recommended that, in future, unless matters improved, responsibility for the police should be transferred to the Imperial side of the dyarchy.[63]

Party government also had serious repercussions for the local courts. As the Constitution of 1921 was a written legal instrument in its own right, it was inevitable that disputes of a political and constitutional nature would end up in the courts for adjudication.[64] But the courts, rather than helping to resolve conflicts, gave rise to others.[65] The belief took hold that Judges tended to be biased or partisan in their decisions.[66] The 1931 Commission stated that it could not say whether 'this accusation'[67] was 'validly founded, but [that] the accusation exists.' Indeed, some people held that because of judicial bias 'the state of the Law Courts was one of the chief causes of unrest and of the existing disputes.' [68] The Commission found that the belief in the partisanship of Judges was the cause of dissatisfaction with the judicial system in Malta. The Report stated that,



'The real root of the matter lies in the continual innuendo that the Judges are appointed too often from the nominees of one political party and that the whole Bench is practically of one political colour and brings political bias into the law.'[69]

The political bias to which they referred was linguistic. The legal profession in Malta was still predominantly, though not wholly, pro-Italian language and staunch defenders of its use in Malta. Its leaders were Enrico Mizzi and Sir Arturo Mercieca, the latter a former Crown Advocate who was promoted to the office of Chief Justice after 1921. This, in itself, was enough to make the pro-English Constitutional Party and the pro-Maltese Labour Party suspicious of the Courts, while one defeat after another at the hands of the Court of Appeal, of which Mercieca was the President, transformed in their minds suspicion into fact.[70] The most important of these defeats came at a time when Strickland's Constitutionalists were in government in alliance with the Labour Party. Their response was to publicly attack the Judges concerned, to delay cases in which the government had some interest, (but in which it feared defeat), by not assigning Judges and by seeking to assign to the Court of Appeal Judges 'considered to be favourable to it.'[71] As in the case of the police the only solution envisaged by the Commission of 1931 was that control over appointments to the Judiciary should be transferred to the Imperial government so that, in future, Ministers would not be able to secure Judges 'known for strong adherence to a political party.'[72]

Thus, once again, political conflict took its toll on the public service, although on this occasion it was party conflict rather than conflict between Malta and London, that was the cause. Nonetheless, as in the past, those in government sought to employ the administrative machinery under their control to defeat or thwart their opponent's schemes. Parties in opposition, however, were not themselves above reproach and frequently employed tactics which demonstrated an insincere commitment towards responsible government and the spirit of the Constitution. This led one Lt Governor to report in the 1920s, that in Malta governments were assailed by

the opposition in a way which was 'without parallel in other Parliaments of the Empire'[73] and that intimidation was both a common and an effective weapon in Maltese politics. The intensity of the conflict eventually resulted in greater political polarization which soon spread to the public service creating within it further division and fragmentation. This could not be avoided. Unlike the civil service of India or West Africa, the Maltese civil service was composed almost entirely of local individuals. Within such a small community as that of Malta, where personal and family ties tend to be strong and where conflicts are made to centre around such emotional issues as language, culture, and religion, neutrality becomes almost next to impossible.[74] Hence, it may be said, that to a large extent, the overall impact of responsible government on the Maltese public service was a negative one.

#### BUREAUCRATIC GOVERNMENT RESTORED

In granting the Maltese their self-government constitution the Secretary of State had remarked that it was up to the Maltese to make it work.[75] Given the adversarial nature of Maltese politics this soon proved to be a forlorn hope. By 1928, Government and opposition were engaged in a series of running battles in which compromise formed no part of the political agenda. But matters were made worse by a feud between Church and State over clerical opposition to the government's financial estimates.[76] The climax was reached on the eve of the 1930 general elections when the Bishops of Malta issued a Pastoral Letter in which they declared it to be 'a grave sin' for any Catholic to vote for, or stand as a candidate for Strickland's Constitutional Party or his allies the Labour Party, while priests were instructed to withhold the administration of sacraments to those 'obstinate' enough to disobey these instructions.[77]

As neither the Governor nor the Secretary of State could allow such 'interferences with the freedom of electors...to exercise their political judgement'[78] the elections were suspended. In June the Constitution

itself was temporarily suspended and all power, once again, reverted to the Governor.[79] The latter took immediate advantage of the situation and appointed an English Commissioner of Police to assist the local Commissioner, on the ground that disturbances were likely.[80] In practice, the Governor hoped to use the period of direct government to improve both the efficiency and the quality of the police force. In this he was successful for, by 1932, it was independently reported 'that the police appear to be far more efficient now than they were at the last proposed [1930] election...'[81] For their part, the permanent officials were quick to consolidate all authority over their departments in their own hands. This led Strickland to complain

'that the permanent officials were not consulting ministers and that as little correspondence as possible was being shown'[82]

to them, even though they had continued to hold their office in a consultative capacity.[83]

In 1931, as already noted, the problems of Malta became the subject of a Royal Commission under the chairmanship of Askwith.[84] Also noted was the Commission's recommendation that, for the time being, the police force should continue to be under the control of ministers but that, if at any time, the Governor was not satisfied that it was being efficiently or impartially administered, then the latter was to be empowered to assume direct control over its affairs.[85] The Commission proposed too, that authority over judicial appointments should no longer remain with local ministers but ought to be transferred to the Imperial Government. Both these proposals were approved by London. Also approved was the recommendation that the 1921 Constitution, with some amendments, should be restored. The Maltese were to be given a second opportunity to 'justify their desire for self-government by showing that they are capable of it.'[86]

But the amendments which concerned the standing of Italian in Malta were to wreck such hopes. In its Report, the Askwith Commission had

recommended, as Mercieca sadly recalled,

'the removal of Italian as a teaching subject in the Government elementary schools, and as the official language of the Criminal Courts,'[87]

and the insertion of Maltese in its place. Strong protests against these proposals were made, in Malta, by the various professional bodies as well as the Judges, but, given the growing strength of fascism in Italy, the changes were approved by the Colonial Office.

New elections for both the Senate and the Legislative Assembly were held in June 1932. Political meetings were accompanied by disturbances while threats and violence were not lacking.[88] The "Partito Nazionalista", which had made revocation of the language provisions one of its electoral platforms, won a landslide victory. Immediately, Enrico Mizzi set about restoring the status of Italian which 'was again given the place of honour, as a subject for tests in the competitions for Government employment.'[89] Italian influence, including Fascist propaganda, was allowed to increase and several Italian schools were allowed to operate in the Island.[90] It was not the best time for such policies considering the strained relationship between Britain and Italy, and the complex international situation. As we have seen in previous Chapters, it was at times like these that the importance to Britain of the fortress rose tremendously. Everything not connected with strategic interests or, as was the case in Malta in 1933, which conflicted with those interests, had to be subordinated to them. But British warnings to local ministers to desist from their policy went unheeded.[91] The Governor, who was holidaying in England, hastily returned to his post, took full control of the police and, following an ultimatum - which was rejected - to the Maltese side of the dyarchy, he dismissed the government, dissolved the local Parliament, and suspended the Constitution.[92] Power, once again, reverted to the Governor.

The policies that Britain followed in Malta in the following years must have made it plain to all that war with Italy, although not

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inevitable, was highly likely. Indeed Malta became a veritable fortress. Political meetings, public or otherwise, were banned and the press was placed under stringent controls, so much so that a spate of sedition cases were now brought before the Courts.[93] In 1934 the function of jurors in sedition trials was abolished and it was decreed that sittings were to be held "in camera" and the sentence of the Court was to be accompanied by motivations that had also to remain secret.[94] Judges, known for their pro-English sympathies, were also elevated to the judicial bench, a clear sign this, that the government had no confidence that the pro-Italian Judges on the Bench, which included the Chief Justice, would give adequate protection to what were considered legitimate British interests in Malta.[95] This lack of confidence may have been strengthened by the fact that, in their private lives, Judges frequently went out of their way to be seen participating in cultural activities which had the glorification of all things Italian as their aim.

By 1934 the decision to remove Italian from any of its remaining strongholds was taken and this time there was to be no compromise or going back. Hence, the use of Italian was completely abolished from the Courts and Maltese substituted for it.[96] Similarly, Italian was no longer to be the medium of instruction in the University with English and Maltese taking its place.[97] To ensure the success of its measure the government also stripped this body of any vestige of administrative autonomy it may have possessed.[98] In 1936 the "Istituto di Cultura Italiana", a Rome sponsored body, was closed down, as were the other Italian schools which had been established under the 1932-33 Partito Nazionalista administration.[99] In the course of time even street names received their due attention, being changed from Italian to Maltese.

Seen in its wider context British policy can be said to have been two-edged. First, it sought to strengthen its authority over Malta in defence of its wider strategic interests. Second, it strove to strengthen



its rule by drawing on the local patriotism, not of the Italian-educated professions, but of the ordinary people, hence the elevation of Maltese, the language of the masses, to a status co-equal with that of English and over that of Italian. Hancock wrote that in the 1930s

'British rule was appealing to the stunted Maltese nationalism of the masses against the cultural programmes which had been championed by the old nationalist party'.[100]

It was a policy which aimed to cultivate the affections of ordinary Maltese by the 'blending of an ancestral and Imperial patriotism.'[101] The spirit of the new call found expression in the new government-produced text books, 'books of Maltese history, told in the Maltese language', but 'with the Union Jack stamped on the cover.'[102] It was, to say the least, an unusual policy, aiming to encourage nationalist emotions which colonial governments normally sought to curb if not deny.[103] It was a policy which, in some ways, was similar to that adopted by Ball in the period 1800-1809, differing only in that, at the time, it was directed to physical needs not emotional niceties.[104] It was a policy first advocated by Savona and later by Strickland but which the colonial government had refrained from pressing fully in deference to the wishes of the professional classes.[105] It was, in brief, an unusual policy for an unusual colony in which the political (local) and the strategic (British) were inextricably interdependent. But as World War Two was to show, British policy after 1933 was to reap its reward - an intense local patriotism which resisted both the Italian and Nazi German onslaught, and a closer relationship with Britain which directed and sustained that resistance.

Britain, however, went further. It not only tried to balance strategic interests with the gut nationalism of the lower classes, but embarked on a programme of action which was intended to make Crown Colony rule popular, at least, among them. Following the 1919 riots, Governor Plumer had proposed a strategy which he hoped would stimulate economic development. It was to be a government led and financed strategy.[106]

London had seen in it one of the alternative courses of action open to it. One colonial official declared it a strategy for 'killing Home Rule with kindness' for it amounted to giving the Maltese 'liberal doles' in recompense for the political disabilities imposed on them by the fortress.[107] Rejected, in 1919, in favour of conceding Malta responsible government, it was now adopted to meet the new situation. In the period 1934-39 the government inaugurated and carried through a remarkable programme of public welfare. Health centres, especially for mothers, were established while a study of the causes of undulant fever, (sometimes called Maltese Fever), was undertaken with success.[108] Hospitals were improved and hygiene and sanitation given greater priority. By 1938 the infant mortality rate and deaths from undulant fever were the lowest on record.[109] Agriculture was improved and fisheries given greater support.[110] A programme of road construction and school building, in addition to an extension of the dockyards were also undertaken.[111] Events, for a time, aided Britain in its efforts. We have seen at various stages of this study that the Maltese tended to prosper whenever the threat of armed conflict raised its head in the Mediterranean.[112] In the few years between the Anglo-Italian crisis over Abyssinia and the outbreak of hostilities in 1940, a period of incessant crisis, Malta thrived. British defence spending in Malta increased and unemployment was drastically reduced. According to Austin

'by 1939, the standard of living was higher than it had ever been: the national income per head was higher than that of Greece and not much below that of Italy.'[113]

How did the public service fit in during this period? Crown Colony Government meant bureaucratic government and, therefore, the Crown could not govern without either the advice or active support of its permanent officials on the spot. Even so, in 1933-40, Britain saw in the local Civil Service merely a mechanism through which it could stamp its authority on the Island and for carrying through its various programmes. In fact, first



the suspension and later the abrogation of responsible government, were followed by the publication of official notices vesting administrative authority over government departments in the hands of individual Heads of Department, although final authority belonged to the Governor alone.[114] Most public servants, though not all, were quite happy to see the demise of self-government. Party government had proved a strain on them. Incessant quarrels between government and opposition, as well as constant litigation in the Courts, had brought the administration to a complete halt.[115] From time to time individual public servants were made the object of pointed personal attacks by opposition newspapers for merely carrying out the orders of their political heads as, for example, for instructing labourers to replace Italian street-names with ones in English or vice-versa, depending on which party was in government.[116] Restoration of direct rule did relieve them of such difficulties but, only partially, for newspaper attacks, which in Malta were considered to be an efficacious method for intimidating opponents, continued until 1940 when the outbreak of war finally silenced them.[117] Observers have noted, that in the circumstances, Maltese civil servants reacted positively and their efficiency helped London no end in securing its economic and social objectives in Malta.[118] Sir Harry Luke, the Lt Governor between 1930-38, seemed to confirm this when, in one of his speeches before leaving Malta, described the Maltese Civil Service as the best he had known.[119]

Despite these words, from the very beginning, it was clear that Britain was not prepared to trust too much for the success of its policies on local civil servants. British officers were brought in to assist the Governor in implementing the new measures.[120] The Courts, traditionally held to be the seat of opposition to the English language and to the Imperial Government generally, were the first to receive this treatment.[121] Apart from placing, on the judicial bench, legal men who were known for their sympathy, if not support, towards Britain,[122] it was

also thought necessary, at one stage, to introduce a rule - which would have brought Malta in line with other Crown Colonies - whereby appointments to the judicial bench were no longer to be restricted to law graduates of the University of Malta. But this idea was abandoned.[123] Other British officials, however, were appointed to the civil service proper, a measure which raised some protests from the Malta Civil Service Association.[124] This Association had all but ceased to exist under responsible government. Party conflict dominated throughout, a state of affairs which continues today.[125] The point is, however, that as the Association was impotent to press its claims under responsible government it was hardly in a position to resist London.

Other developments, however, must have soon made it clear to those who might have thought that resistance was possible or that British resolve to push through the elimination of Italian could not be weakened. The first concerned the removal from office, with loss of pension, of advocate Carlo Mallia, professor of Commercial Law at the University, and of Vincenzo Bonello, Curator of Arts at the National Museum and teacher of the History of Art.[126] The reason given for their dismissal was vague, namely that they had carried on activities prejudicial to Imperial interests in Malta.[127] As these individuals were in very close contact with Italian consular officials in Malta, it is fair to assume that they were suspected of being informers.[128] They were in fact denied, despite their efforts, the formal enquiry which was prescribed by the Colonial Regulations, a novel step certainly in the case of Malta.[129]

A second development concerned candidates to the civil service. Although over the years many changes had taken place in the examination system through which new clerks were recruited, these changes were mainly confined either to the weighting in marks allowed for the various subjects examined, or as to which subjects were obligatory and which were optional. In 1857, for example, when examinations were first introduced, Italian and

English were both obligatory subjects and carried equal marks. Over the years, however, Italian began to lose out to English. In the 1880s its total mark was reduced to below that for English. In the 1930s it was made an optional subject. The only change which had taken place and which was of a somewhat different character was the introduction of nomination before competition. In 1938, however, a new rule was introduced which laid down

'that candidates who pass part one of the examination were to be subjected to a personal interview. Those who fail the interview shall not proceed to part two.'[130]

This new rule was intended to ensure that those who were not considered loyal to Britain would not proceed to part two of the examination, the reason for their failure being so unmistakable that it would act as a deterrent to others hoping for a secure, if not always a rewarding, career.

The third and final development was to prove the most dramatic. In September 1939, following its latest aggression, this time against Poland, Britain and France declared war on Nazi Germany. By early 1940 France was on the verge of defeat and British troops were everywhere on the retreat. German victory seemed assured and it was expected that Italy would enter the war as their ally. Whenever this was to occur an attack against Malta was certain to come. In expectation of this attack several Nazionalisti, including Enrico Mizzi and the entire journalistic staff of his newspaper, were arrested and interned.[131] The attack finally came on June 11, 1940. The Governor now put into operation the instructions which had been communicated to him six days earlier. Several public servants, whose loyalty was suspected, were arrested and interned, the most prominent among these being Sir Arturo Mercieca, the Chief Justice. All those arrested, however, were granted the entire pension to which they were entitled.[132] An attempt to deprive them of it by members of the Constitutional Party was in fact resisted by the Lt Governor himself.[133] Eventually Mizzi, Mercieca and several of those arrested were deported to East Africa to wait out the end of the war.[134]

None of these measures were met with popular opposition. On the contrary as war with Italy loomed larger the anti-Italian sentiment of the working classes became more manifest. In 1939 Britain had decided to re-introduce the elective element in the Council of Government and to replace the existing one consisting of the Governor and a number of nominated officials. The new Council was to consist of the Governor, eight-officials, two nominated members, and ten elected representatives.[135] The Governor had the power to veto any Bill or to impose any enactment rejected by the Council. In the election that followed the Nazionalisti were defeated by the pro-British Constitutionalists.[136] This, in itself, was a significant departure from the past. But a further demonstration of anti-Italy feeling came in 1940 when, news that a bust of Fortunato Mizzi had been unveiled in Italy, an attack was made on the house in which the father of Maltese Italianata had, until his death in 1905, lived.[137] Italian, hence, was on the point of being rejected; the outbreak of war ensured that rejection.

British policy after 1933 was clear and unmistakable. It was to prepare the fortress for the events of war with Italy. The civil service was administered with a strict authoritarian regime. Nothing which could deviate Britain from its purpose was allowed. There was no talk of pay rises and no more than token protests at the appointment of a number of British officers over the heads of the locals. Britain was more concerned with ensuring the loyalty of the public service than with effecting changes in it. Having said that, however, a reorganization of the Clerical Branch was announced in 1935, although this description was somewhat of an exaggeration.[138] In fact, this so-called reorganization had two principal aims. First, to consolidate the various number of offices, such as those of Auxiliary Clerks, Clerical Assistants, Shorthand-typists, Unclassified Clerks, Typists and Temporary Hired Clerks, which had been created under party government, into one Lower Division consisting of two equal groups of

clerks, to be designated Auxiliary Clerks and Clerical Assistants. Auxiliary Clerks were to be eligible for promotion - the method was not specified - to a new Higher Division, which consisted of the existing holders of special posts, which had been created on the recommendation of the Clauson Committee in 1913, and of the First, Second and Third Class, which were also to be retained. The government's second aim was to publicly stress that henceforth 'ability to write and speak the English language correctly' and 'the ability to write Maltese'[139] were indispensable conditions for entry into the civil service of Malta and that knowledge of Italian was of marginal importance. This policy was to remain unchanged until 1964 when Malta was granted independence.[140] But in the years leading to World War Two the priority for London was to make the civil service work for Britain. It had long been recognized that, in the event of a siege, the defence of the fortress would be greatly endangered by the presence of a hostile or indifferent population. Thus, while the task of the armed services was to prepare for the military defence of the Island, the function of the civil service was to secure, for Britain, by "good" works, the hearts of the ordinary Maltese. The Maltese, as in the period 1800 to 1814, had to be made to identify their own interests with those of Britain and its empire.[141]

#### CONCLUSION

The necessity to survive the siege of 1940-1943 served to bring the two communities together. The defence of Malta and the resistance of the Maltese in the face of terrible deprivations, rightly made the Island and its people one of the legends of the war.[142] In 1942, at the height of the siege, Britain conferred on 'the Island Fortress of Malta'[143] the George Cross in recognition of the bravery of its inhabitants. In 1943, as so often happens in history, the ironic occurred. On September 10 of that year the Italian Navy was seen limping into Maltese waters to surrender unconditionally.[144] In that same year the British Government gave an

undertaking to restore self-government in Malta at the end of the war.[145] This promise was implemented in 1947, but once again, on the dyarchical model, although the number of items reserved under the so-called MacMichael Constitution were far more limited than in 1921.[146]

The first elections held under the new Constitution resulted in a landslide victory for the Labour Party. Language as an issue, despite the efforts made by Enrico Mizzi and others to revive it, was dead. Class politics was to be the new issue which was to divide Malta into two bitterly opposed political camps. Consequently, internal political crises have continued to be a feature of post war Maltese politics.[147] Periodic breakdowns in Anglo-Maltese relations were not lacking either and continued even after independence. In 1958 Britain was, once again, forced to withdraw the Constitution it had granted in 1947 and to govern the Island directly, until responsible government was restored in 1962.[148] More often than not quarrels between London and Valletta centred around the fortress which continued to exert its influence. As the red lines on the globe, once denoting the extent of the British Empire, receded, the importance of Malta as a fortress declined. After the Suez fiasco of 1956, in an Island where the fortress was the economy, British defence cutbacks fuelled one crisis after another. As in the past the Maltese public service found itself entangled in every crisis and every conflict and, today stands divided as it never has been before. This view is succinctly expressed in the Report of the Public Service Reform Commission - A New Public Service for Malta - which states that

'politicians, who are subjected to diverse pressures, have succumbed to the temptation to factor the Service into the strategies of power politics. Willingly or unwillingly, the public service came to be associated with the use of public resources for partisan or private gain. As a result, trust between the political authorities and public officers on the one hand, and between the Service and its customers on the other, has been seriously eroded. So, too, has the internal cohesion of the Service, when its leadership was either compromised or relegated to the sidelines, and when it was deprived of the authority to direct its affairs and renew itself.'[149]

But the history of the public service in the post-war period will have to

be told in another study, perhaps, by others.

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2. "The Financial and Economic Situation of Malta", Report of Lt Col L.S. Amery, MP, (1919), C.O.883/7, PRO, Kew, London.
3. G. Bonnici, (1931), Storja tal-Partit tal-Haddiema, Sensiela Kotkba Socjalisti, Malta, p.39.
4. Report of the Royal Commission of 1931, Cmd3993, HMSO, London.
5. E. Bradford, (1985), Siege: Malta 1940-1943, Hamish Hamilton, London, p.1.
6. D. Austin, (1971), Malta and the End of Empire, Frank Cass, London, p.13.
7. Ibid.
8. P. Mason, (1985), The Men Who Ruled India, Guild Pub, London, p.275.
9. Report of Lt Col Amery, (1919), op.cit., C.O.883/7, PRO, Kew, London.
10. G.C. Lewis, (1841), An Essay on the Government of Dependencies, Murray, London, pp.295-6.
11. For an excellent study on this subject see G. Martin, (1972), The Durham Report and British Policy, Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge, UK.
12. P. Mason, op.cit., p.275 and Letters Patent, 14 Apr. 1921, C.O.158/427, PRO, Kew, London.
13. It was a description which had remained constant throughout the whole of the period of British rule. But what constituted 'purely' domestic affairs in a fortress was difficult to determine.
14. In 1864, Sec. of State Cardwell seemed to have, by his rule, settled the issue but, as we have seen, things in Malta were never so clear cut.
15. D. Austin, op.cit., pp.13-14.
16. P. Mason, op.cit., p.175.
17. J. J. Cremona, (1963), An Outline of Maltese Constitutional Development, Malta Univ. Press, Valletta, p.22.
18. E. Dobie, (1967), Malta's Road to Independence, Univ. of Oklahoma Press, Oklahoma, USA, p.84.
19. A. Mercieca, op.cit., p.126.
20. Letters Patent, 30 Apr. 1921, C.O.158/427, PRO, Kew, London.
21. E. Dobie, op.cit., p.85.

22. Joseph Howard was Director of a cigarette manufacturing concern and Consul for Japan. His habit of flying the Japanese flag on his car led to criticism in the Legislative Chamber.
23. Robertson (OAG) to Sec. of State, 27 Jun. 1924, C.O.158/434, PRO, Kew, London.
24. Debates of the Legislative Assembly, Sitting of 10 Jul. 1922, pp.2658-2663, Malta Govt. Press, Valletta.
25. Ibid.
26. The British Government did not wish to give the impression that it was conferring Dominion status on Malta and it wished this to be as clear as possible. Colonial Office mins. "Constitution of Malta", 21 Nov. 1919, 2 Dec. 1919, C.O.158/413; 28 May 1920, C.O.158/417, 23 Sept. 1920, C.O.158/419; and 9 Apr. 1921, C.O.158/427, PRO, Kew London.
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28. Debates of the Legislative Assembly, Sitting of 16 Mar. 1922, pp.942-943, Malta Govt. Press, Valletta.
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30. Debates of the Legislative Assembly, Sitting of 10 Jul. 1922, pp.2658-2663, Malta Govt. Press, Valletta.
31. Ibid.
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34. H. Frendo, (1979), Party Politics in a Fortress Colony, Midsea Books, Valletta, Ch.II.
35. Political and professional life in Malta were complicated by the need to secure a tolerable standard of living compatible to one's status. Hence the reason why so many opted to accept the officer of secure employment when it came. See A. Mercieca, op.cit.
36. L'Assemblea Nazionale di Malta, (1923), Malta Govt. Press, Valletta.
37. R. MacGregor Dawson, (1929), The Civil Service of Canada, Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford, pp.37-40.
38. See Chapters Ten and Eleven where this view is graphically expressed.
39. Letters Patent, 30 Apr. 1921, C.O.158/427, PRO, Kew, London.
40. G. Bonnici, op.cit., pp.39-41; E. Dobie, op.cit., pp.84-85.
41. Malta Government Gazette, 11 Feb. 1922, No.6459, C.O.162/55, PRO, Kew, London.
42. A.V. Laferla, (1946), British Malta, Aquilina & Co, Valletta, Vol.II, p.219.



43. Anon, (1981), Il-Gwerra ghall-Imhuh, DOI, Malta Govt. Press, Valletta, p.15.
44. Debates of the Legislative Assembly, Sitting of 24 Feb. 1922, pp.732-733, Malta Govt. Press, Valletta. Also, Malta Government Gazette, No.6487, 9 Jun. 1922, C.O.162/55, PRO, Kew, London.
45. Congreve to Thomas, 19 Apr. 1924, C.O.158/434, PRO, Kew, London.
46. Congreve to Amery, 22110/27, C.O.158/441, PRO, Kew, London.
47. Malta Government Gazette, No.1922, 13 Nov. 1922, C.O.162/55, PRO, Kew, London.
48. Debates of the Legislative Assembly, Sitting of 15 May 1922, pp.1860-1880, Malta Govt. Press, Valletta.
49. As we have seen, no party was in a position to win an absolute majority of seats and several attempts by individual parties to strike up alliances with other parties were made. Every party, therefore, made special efforts not to antagonize public servants.
50. M.J. Schiavone, (1987), L-Elezzjonijiet f'Malta: 1849-1981, Bugelli Pub, Valletta, p.23.
51. E. Dobie, op.cit., p.84.
52. Ibid.
53. Address by HE the Governor to Senate and Legislative Assembly, 3 Nov. 1921, in Malta Government Gazette, 4 Nov. 1921, C.O.162/54, PRO, Kew, London.
54. Malta Government Gazette, No.6833, 7 Dec. 1925, C.O.162/58 and No.7059, 30 Dec. 1927, C.O.162/61, PRO, Kew, London
55. Debates of Legislative Assembly, Sitting of 15 Nov. 1921, Malta Govt. Press, Valletta.
56. Ibid., Sitting of 4 Dec. 1922.
57. Strickland to Dawe, 30 Sept. 1925, C.O.158/438, PRO, Kew, London.
58. E. Dobie, op.cit., p.91.
59. Malta Royal Commission of 1931, (1932), Mins. of Evidence, Colonial Office, No.68, HMSO, London.
60. Plumer to Churchill, 22 Feb. 1921, and Plumer to Milner, 31 Jan. 1921, C.O.158/423, PRO, Kew, London.
61. Royal Commission of 1931, op.cit., pp.139-40.
62. Ibid., p.40.
63. Ibid., p.142.
64. The list of cases brought before the Courts is too long to reproduce here but one of the most important concerned the legal standing of TUC

representatives holding seats in the Upper House, the Senate.

65. Royal Commission of 1931, op.cit., p.107.
66. Ibid., p.107.
67. Ibid., p.109.
68. Ibid., p.107.
69. Ibid., pp.108-9.
70. A. Cassar, (1991), Il-"Compact", Sensiela Kotbka Socjalisti, Malta, pp.60-1.
71. A. Mercieca, op.cit., p.178.
72. Royal Commission of 1931, op.cit., p.109.
73. Roberston (OAG) to Sec. of State, 27 Jun. 1924, C.O.158/434, PRO, Kew, London.
74. Amery, as we have seen, had made it clear that public service leaders, being Maltese, found themselves caught between loyalty to office and loyalty to their personal values or interests.
75. A.V. Laferla, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.226-7.
76. E. Dobie, op.cit., p.93.
77. D. Austin, op.cit., pp.11-2.
78. Ibid., p.12.
79. Malta Government Gazette, No.7331, 2 Jul. 1930, and No.7336, 18 Jul. 1930, C.O.162/63, PRO, Kew, London.
80. Royal Commission of 1931, op.cit., pp.140-1.
81. Ibid., p.158.
82. Ibid., p.79.
83. Du Cane to Passfield, 14 Aug. 1930, C.O.883/8, PRO, Kew, London.
84. The members of this Commission were: Lord Askwith, Sir Walter Egerton and Count de Salis.
85. Royal Commission of 1931, op.cit., p.167.
86. Ibid., p.46.
87. A. Mercieca, op.cit., p.222.
88. Ibid., pp.224-5.
89. Ibid., p.229.
90. R. Borg, (1991), Malta u l-Faxxizmu, Sensiela Kotba Socjalisti, Valletta, pp.27-35.

91. D. Austin, op.cit., p.13.
92. A. Mercieca, op.cit., pp.229-30.
93. Enrico Mizzi was one of those charged with sedition but following an appeal before his long-standing friend, Sir Arturo Mercieca, the Chief Justice, he was acquitted. The same fate was not, however, reserved to some members of the Labour Party who were found guilty of sedition on the grounds that they subscribed to the Soviet Weekly and for being in possession of some G.B. Shaw's books. They were given a prison term but the Governor had them released, though not pardoned.
94. A. Mercieca, op.cit., p.236..
95. Ibid., pp.236-8.
96. A. Cassar, op.cit., p.65.
97. Ibid., pp.67-8.
98. A. Vella, (1969), University of Malta, A Bicentenary Memorial, National Press, Malta, p.102.
99. R. Borg, op.cit., p.76.
100. W.K. Hancock, (1937), Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs, Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford, Vol.II, p.427.
101. Ibid., p.428.
102. Ibid., p.429.
103. Colonial rule and nationalism constitute two incompatible forces. History has shown that as the latter grew in strength the authority of colonial authorities declined. Very frequently colonial powers - Britain included - took strong measures to restrain nationalist movements in their colonies. Hence, the contradiction in the case of Malta. See R.F. Holland, (1985), European Decolonization 1918-1981: An Introductory Survey, Macmillan, London, UK; R.I. Rotberg, (1965), The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa: The Making of Malawi and Zambia, 1873-1964, Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA; B. Porter, (1984), (2nd ed), The Lion's Share, A Short History of British Imperialism 1850-1983, Longman, London, esp. Chs.VII to IX; and D.K. Fieldhouse, (1982), The Colonial Empires, A Comparative Survey from the 18th Century, Macmillan, London, UK, esp. Ch.XVII.
104. Ball's policy, as we have seen in Chapter Three, was intended to secure Maltese support for British annexation of Malta at the time of the war with Napoleon. In the 1930s British policy aimed at consolidating Maltese support for Britain in the event of war with Mussolini's Italy.
105. Both Savona and Strickland had pressed, in the last two decades of the 19th Century, the importance of giving official recognition to the Maltese language. Although there was a great deal of sympathy in London with their view there also existed a strong desire not to press the Maltese language against the wishes of the elected representatives.
106. Plumer to Milner, 9 Jul. 1919, C.O.158/410, PRO, Kew, London.

107. Ellis min. on Plumer to Milner, as above.
108. E. Dobie, op.cit., p.108.
109. Ibid., p.108.
110. Ibid., pp.108-9.
111. D. Austin, op.cit., p.16.
112. See, for example, Chapters Three, Seven and Ten.
113. D. Austin, op.cit., p.16.
114. Malta Government Gazette, No.7331, 2 Jul. 1930; No.7336, 18 Jul. 1930, both C.O.162/63; and Ordinance No.XIX of 1936, Malta Govt. Gazette, 2 Sept. 1936, C.O.162/74, PRO, Kew, London.
115. In 1928 the Nationalist opposition won a great victory in the Courts when it succeeded in having all the legislation passed by the government declared invalid on the ground that the TUC representatives on the Senate had no legal right to sit or vote in that Chamber.
116. In Malta opposition to government has no limits. Even today, newspapers continue with the system began in the 1920s of attacking everything and everyone connected with government. The aim is to so intimidate its employees that they would refrain from carrying out the policies of the party in government.
117. The war brought with it strict censorship. Infact, the only newspaper that was able to continue printing was the Times of Malta, the property of the Strickland family, which was supplied with newsprint by the authorities.
118. Without the active cooperation of Maltese public servants little could have been achieved and Britian was aware of this.
119. A. Mercieca, op.cit., p.271.
120. Ibid., p.265.
121. A. Mercieca, op.cit., pp.257-8.
122. Sir Augustino Bartolo, Prof R. Galea and others, all staunchly pro-English, were elevated to the Judicial Bench in this period.
123. A. Mercieca, op.cit., p.222.
124. A. Mercieca, op.cit., p.265 and Sec., Malta Civil Service Ass. to Lt Governor, 10 Dec. 1934, C.O.158/480, PRO, Kew, London.
125. Public service unions have continued to find it difficult to resist the pressures on their members by political parties. In recent years they have abandoned their exclusiveness and joined with other non-public sector unions to form one large trade union, the UHM.
126. R. Borg, op.cit., p.84.
127. A. Mercieca, op.cit., p.259.

128. R. Borg, op.cit., p.84.
129. R. Borg, op.cit., pp.84-5 and A. Mercieca, op.cit., p.259.
130. Malta Government Gazette, No.8409, 25 Feb. 1938 C.O.162/77, PRO, Kew, London.
131. H. Frendo, (1979), Party Politics in a Fortress Island, Midsea Books, Valletta, pp.210-11.
132. A. Mercieca, op.cit., p.289.
133. Ibid., p.294.
134. H. Frendo, op.cit., p.210 and A. Mercieca, op.cit., pp.298-302.
135. E. Dobie, op.cit., pp.110-111.
136. Ibid., p.113.
137. A. Mercieca, op.cit., p.288.
138. Malta Government Gazette, No.8053, 12 Jul. 1935, C.O.162/71, PRO, Kew, London.
139. Ibid.
140. Britain granted Malta its independence in 1964 when the Nationalist Party was in government. Soon after, the Maltese government made Italian one of the compulsory subjects to be examined in public service examinations.
141. See Chapter Three.
142. For those who lived through the war, but especially for those who served in the Mediterranean and North African campaigns, Malta remains a legend not easily forgotten. Even as I write donations are pouring in at a London society of war veterans for the setting up, in the Whitehall area, of a monument in remembrance of Maltese and British servicemen who had taken part in the defence of the Island.
143. H. Luke, (1968), Malta, An Account and an Appreciation, Corgi Books, London, p.252.
144. D. Austin, op.cit., p.20.
145. Ibid.
146. E. Dobie, op.cit., pp.121-23.
147. The 1987 election was conducted in an atmosphere of intimidation and violence, the climax to 40 years of intense political struggle between the Nationalist Party and the Malta Labour Party. The turnout at the polls at the last election was of 96% of the electorate.
148. The crisis, in 1958, came about as a result of the British decision to privatise the naval dockyard in Malta and to lay off thousands of Maltese workers from its naval establishments.
149. A New Public Service for Malta: Report of the Public Service Reform Commission, (1989), Malta Govt. Press, Valletta, p.8.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### CONCLUSION

This study has examined the historical development of the Maltese civil service within the period 1800-1940 in the context of its social, economic and political environment. It is the first full length study of this particular British colonial administration which has been surprisingly neglected by Maltese historians and other students of colonial history. Indeed, both as an institution in its own right and/or as an integral element in the political process of colonial administration, the Maltese public service, unlike others, has failed to attract the attention it deserves. In fact a recent international study, which purports to examine the impact of the British colonial experience on Malta, almost ignores this institution altogether.[1] While it might be readily acknowledged, judging from the above discussion and the vast literature which is extant, that the Maltese public service was not in the same league as the Indian Civil Service, or for that matter, that of Ceylon, it must also be admitted, as this study has amply demonstrated, that it pre-dated and had a more intriguing - if not altogether colourful - history than many others in the British Empire.

This neglect of the Maltese Civil Service becomes even less understandable, however, when one takes into consideration the fact that, for 140 out of 164 years of British rule in Malta, the civil government of this fortress was entrusted to this body. Furthermore, the Maltese public service enjoyed a creditable first in that it was the first public service in a British non-settlement colony to be almost fully indigenized by the middle of the nineteenth century. We have had occasion to see at various points in the narrative that, in Malta, this proved to be a point of some significance for the see-saw nature of its political and constitutional process. The Maltese civil service had also the distinction of being among the first in the British Empire to have its members recruited through a

competitive examination system. Finally, while the governments of other colonies came to provide and administer schools, to provide and administer hospitals, and to create and run commercial concerns rather late in the nineteenth century,[2] that of Malta had always been intimately connected with such activities. These factors cannot be thrust aside or ignored for they raise questions which are significant for the understanding of Maltese public administration as it was and as it is today.

Another feature, which this study has forcefully emphasized, is that this neglect is not due to a dearth of material. Notwithstanding, it must also be admitted that the failure of the "practitioner", (who must have passed the best years of his life serving in this institution), to make his contribution to make it better known and understood, has created gaps which cannot be easily filled. The reason or reasons for this are unknown and one can only speculate about the possible scenarios that have led to this state of affairs. One explanation could be that the practice of sons following their fathers into the service was much more common than the mere survey of official records can ever reveal and it may have been the case that none wished to create difficulties for the other. This concern would have been further augmented if the incidence of inter-marriage among civil service families was also relatively high. We did see, for example, in Chapter Eleven, one Colonial Office official state that Maltese Heads of Departments tended to be nearly all connected by marriage.[3] In an Island the size of Malta, where the number of educated persons was rather small, this might very well have been the case. Another scenario may be that private papers or recollections in the form of diaries do exist, but that their owners have, as yet, neither considered their publication nor making them available for scholarly research. Perhaps the present research may encourage them to do one or the other. Whatever the reasons, however, the absence of such sources in published or unpublished form does determine a little the style of this work, making the discussion particularly dependent

on official records.

However, in this context, this study serves to give greater meaning, more depth and a wider perspective to studies of Maltese political history under British colonial rule. It also helps to fill a void in an otherwise rich literature on British colonial history. Finally, by laying strong foundations for more research and comparative study, it aims to inspire others to build upon it. This study, however, raises issues of its own and these require brief comment by way of conclusion.

As noted in the Introduction to this thesis, the predominant aim of this work was to trace the historical development of the Maltese public service during the period beginning with British rule, in September 1800, to the outbreak of war in the Mediterranean in 1940. It was argued, in some detail, that in every case, there is a context, an environment, or administrative politics - a term which we borrowed from Peter Self - which explains and gives meaning to this historical account. Public administrations, it was argued, do not exist or develop within a vacuum. In fact, three interrelated propositions reflecting the importance of the socio-economic and political environment were suggested at the outset of this research. The first concerned continuity, or the impact of the pull of the past or of other factors, on organizational structures, features and functions which, despite the passage of time, remained relevant and functional. The second aimed to identify the factors which, more than others, impinged on the Maltese public service, buttressing continuity or inducing change within Maltese public administration. Three factors were specially singled out: Malta's strategic location and fortress role; the Island's weak and dependent economy; and its geographic size. Finally, it was proposed that these factors, together, pressed on Maltese public servants a "dirigiste" role in the government and administrative affairs of the colony.

When explaining, in Chapter One, why continuity was adopted as a theme



or proposition for this study, it was argued that, prior to its occupation by, and cession to Britain, Malta possessed a system of public administration and an administrative tradition (described in some detail in Chapter Two), that went back several centuries. It had, in other words, an administrative system that was well and truly established. It was further argued, on the basis of examples taken from studies of British and French public administrations that, despite their gravity, political upheavals do not always manage to undermine existing traditions and structures, at least not in the short term. Hence, it was shown that public administrative systems which enjoy deep historical roots cannot be set aside and replaced so easily. It was a point which, as observed in Chapter Two, the French in Malta had failed to appreciate so that their attempt to sweepingly remodel the local administration met with resistance, revolt and ultimately, defeat. But we also assumed that change would eventually take place which would alter the overall structure of Maltese public administration and, therefore, many of its traditions. Again two reasons were advanced. In the first instance it was assumed that, given the changed status of Malta from that of a quasi-sovereign state to that of a military and naval base, an outpost on the strategic route to India, the structures and tasks of the administration would gradually change to reflect the new status. Second, it was assumed that since, generally speaking, nineteenth century British and colonial notions of administration contrasted sharply with those of paternalism found in Malta, British doctrines and practices would, in time, prevail.

Initially, events seemed set to follow in the logic of these assumptions but, as it turned out, it was a logic that was dictated by the degree of British need of the strategic resource that possession of the Maltese Islands provided. Hence, in the first decade or so of the nineteenth century when, in the words of Ball (Chapter Three), it was necessary to give the Maltese a vested interest in wanting to preserve

British rule in Malta,[4] the accent was on restoring the system of paternal government as it existed under the Order of St John. In fact, Britain had embarked at the time on a deliberate policy which aimed to impress upon the Maltese that their system of paternal administration was safe in its hands. Indeed, it went further and sought to demonstrate this practically by investing considerable sums of capital in its restoration. Moreover, in its proclamation of 1801, addressed to the Maltese, Britain publicly affirmed its resolve to continue with this form of administration[5].

However, between 1813 and 1824, i.e. during Maitland's administration (Chapter Four), when British possession of Malta was no longer under threat or in doubt, an important shift in policy occurred. From now on the accent was on as much change as circumstances would allow. Thus, fees were replaced by fixed salaries; the various Charitable establishments were placed under one central authority; and an Audit Department was established. These were, in themselves, important reforms having long-term implications, for they helped pave the way for a more settled and centralised departmental organization. Furthermore, in line with colonial administrations elsewhere, local office-holders were relegated to the lowest ranks of the public service and their offices filled by British officers, nearly all of them the product of the system of colonial patronage prevalent at the time. But the most important reform of the time was the suppression of the Università' or grain monopoly which, however, resulted in the introduction of the controversial grain or bread tax. It marked too, the first (and also the last), departure from traditional Maltese patterns of paternalistic administration to which Britain, despite its earlier declarations and policies, was wholly opposed.

Up to this stage, therefore, the pattern fitted the sequence of the assumptions, and on the strength of these reforms, it appeared that the Island's system of administration and its public service were destined to

suffer other modifications over the coming years. Indeed, other reforms were carried out, including the introduction of competitive examinations for offices on the clerical establishment (Chapter Seven), and the division of clerks into classes (Chapter Ten). However, as we saw, although such initiatives were innovative, other factors tended to mitigate their impact.

What has emerged is the predominantly resilient character of Maltese public administration in the face of persistent efforts, especially after 1827, by successive generations of colonial officials and their envoys, to remodel it. Continuity was to prevail over change. In fact, as we also saw, the issue which, decade after decade, rose to confront these officials and envoys, was how to break what they considered the stranglehold of its paternalistic traditions and structures of government which, they claimed, stifled individual enterprise and economic development. The local government, it was often stated, did far more for the population than it ought to and that, consequently, the administration tended to be rather large. This, combined with the fact that Malta was too poor to support, from within its own resources, the financial burdens that such an administration entailed, led to the conclusion that it was in the interest of the Maltese themselves that the existing system should be replaced by one based on more liberal values.

British efforts in this direction were not lacking, as the reports of Commissions entrusted with this task, which we have examined, testify. There was the Parliamentary Commission of 1830 (Chapter Five), the Royal Commission of 1836-38 (Chapter Six), the Rowsell Mission and the Julyan Mission (Chapter Nine) of 1877 and 1878 respectively, the Royal Commission of 1911-12 and the Clauson Committee of 1913 (both Chapter Eleven). Nonetheless, despite these and other efforts and, at times, precise instructions from London, the existing administrative edifice proved exceedingly resilient. Not only departments and offices which the local government was repeatedly instructed to suppress, such as the Monte di

Pieta', the Police Physicians establishment, the Treasury, the Printing Office and others, continued to function as before or remained on their earlier footing, but the local administration continued to grow larger and more costly. In fact, we saw, as the discussion progressed, the government taking on greater responsibilities (see Diagram 13:1), such as the building and running of an Opera House (Chapter Eight), sanitation, (Chapter Ten), the Railway Service (Chapter Eleven), research into diseases common to Malta (Chapter Twelve), and the occasional foray into the grain market in times of scarcity. Consequently, nine decades of Colonial Office pressure to have the Island's system of public administration rationalised had produced scant results. Until 1921, the number of departments actually suppressed, could be counted on the fingers of one hand while the rest, sometimes under different names, (e.g. Administration of Public Property to Land Revenue), continued to perform, albeit with some changes, the same functions which they had performed before 1798.

The sting in the tail, however, came in the period 1921-1940 which we examined in Chapter Twelve. First, we witnessed there the failure of elected Maltese politicians, despite their public statements when in opposition, either to improve, or to rationalise the public service. Instead, in their hands the administration became more or less a vehicle for party interests. One reason for this was the stiff competition for votes that existed which made political parties re-think their priorities. Second, we saw that after the withdrawal of responsible government, in 1933, it was Britain's turn to rethink its priorities and it did so to an extent that retrenchment in Malta was no longer seen either as desirable or advantageous. What Britain aimed for now was a policy which, in the face of a growing Italian threat, would, as in 1800-1812, rally the Maltese to its side by giving them a valid cause for wishing to remain under British rule. The appropriate policy at the time appeared to be more paternalism although, as has been shown, Britain did not hesitate to purge, (also as in

# The Administration of Malta 1939

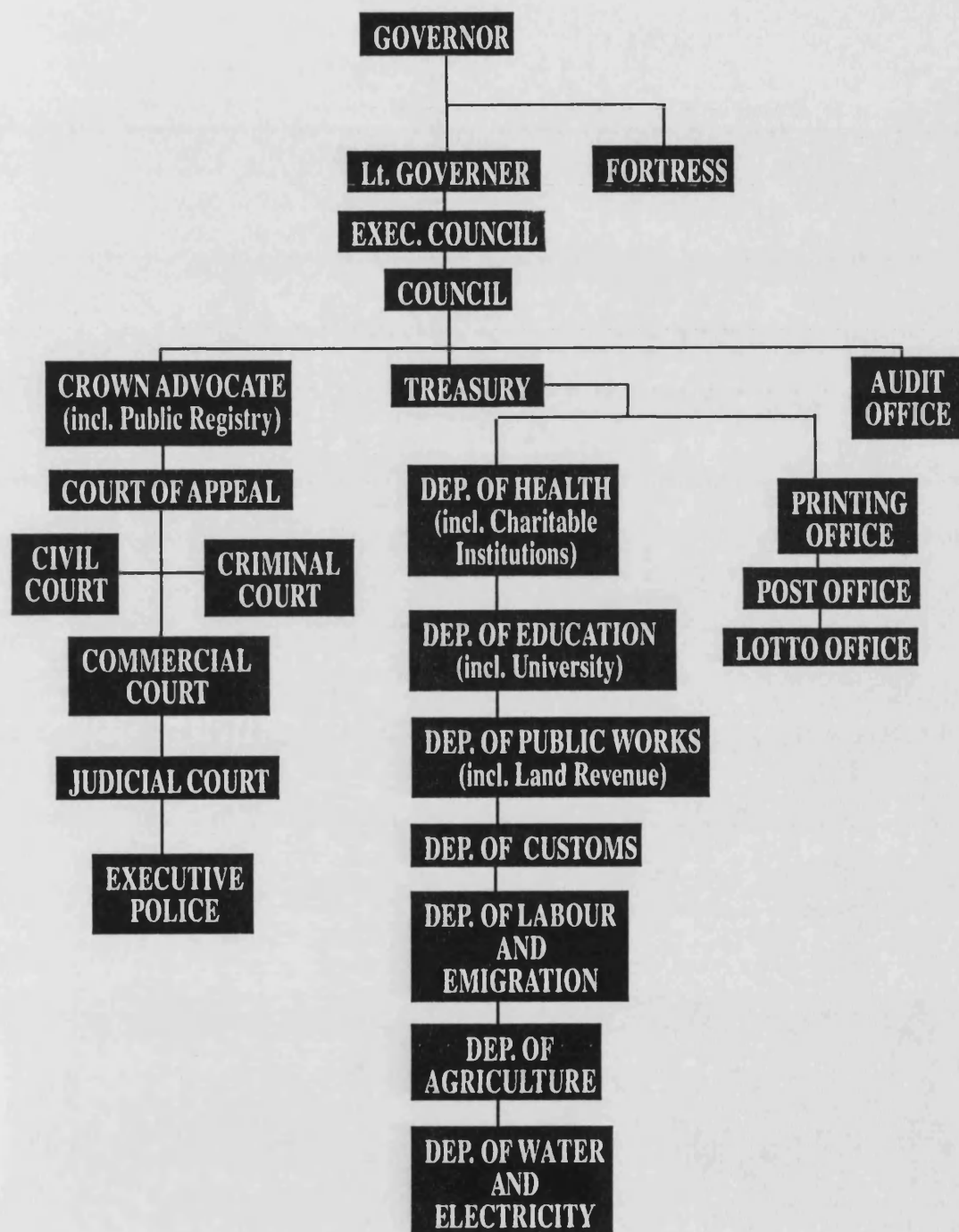


DIAGRAM 13:1

1800), the public service of those elements whom it considered to be attached to the 'cause of the enemy'.[6] Hence, it may be said that, because of the wider political context, by 1940 British policy towards the local public service and the administration generally, had come full circle. Thus, while in September 1800, for political reasons, Britain had deliberately restored the paternal system of government that had existed under the Order, in the period 1933-40, again for political reasons, it deliberately set out to extend it.

Having established continuity we must now explain why this continuity, this stubborn resistance to change, these reversions to earlier policies? The answer that this study has propounded is, that continuity arose because the kind of public service and administrative organization that Malta possessed, existed not so much out of choice, but mainly in response to a set of circumstances which remained dominant throughout the whole of the period under examination. These set of circumstances also gave rise to various vested interests, of individuals, of groups and of the colonial power itself which, in their turn, helped to reinforce continuity. These circumstances were, in the first instance, of a socio-economic nature and consisted of the small size of the Islands and their large civil population, dependence on external sources for food, and a lack of mineral or economic resources. Second, they were strategic and arose from the fortress role which the Islands came to have under the government of the Order of St John and that of Britain. The strategic resource was, in fact, the only important resource that Malta possessed and which, therefore, made Malta worth possessing.

Over the centuries the socio-economic characteristics of Malta had given rise to several problems and difficulties, such as, competition for, and pressure on, such scarce resources as land, food and water; unemployment and generally very low wages for those in employment; and the everpresent danger of severe food shortages and, at times, famine. Before

Malta was ceded to the Order these features were already in evidence and had fashioned in the Islands a form of paternal administration which included some semi-autonomous bodies (Chapter Two). The Maltese, conscious of their general poverty and dependence, tended to regard the activities of this administration as vital to their daily well-being and, in time of crisis, to their very survival. The arrival of the Knights changed nothing from these circumstances but, rather, added to the difficulties, for the meagre resources of Malta had now to be shared with the newcomers. Malta, it must be remembered, was the home of the Order not its colony and its circumstances applied also to the Knights, their foreign regiments and Moorish slaves. This, for example, was not fully true of Britain for, in peace time, its troops were provisioned through separate arrangements from the population. The Order, therefore, recognised how vital, in time of peace, some of the existing institutions, such as the grain monopoly, were for the well-being of the population and, in time of siege, for its own survival. Thus, it strengthened some of them, created new ones and, when necessary, sustained others. To do this the Order invested in Malta some of its European revenues. It also encouraged commerce, notably that of cotton, education and the arts. One outcome of this policy was a large bureaucracy which, through its numerous offices, provided employment opportunities for many Maltese. Another was the emergence of a small literate and professional body from among the inhabitants. In the nineteenth century one British official at the Colonial Office remarked that, among British Crown Colonies, this feature was almost unique to Malta.[7] Consequently, during this period, thanks to the extensive system of paternalism that the Order sustained in Malta, the inhabitants came to enjoy a hitherto unknown period of economic stability and freedom from want. The point here, and an important one too, is that life in Malta was made tolerable because of paternalism. The Order could not and did not change the socio-economic characteristics of Malta. It merely mitigated their influence. Hence, we

saw, that Maltese disenchantment with the government of the Order began to make itself evident when the latter, because of the loss of its European revenues, was no longer in a position to do this anymore.

There can be little doubt that Colonial officials in Downing Street, like the Knights, appreciated that the Maltese were poor and that their standard of living was remarkably low. Our detailed examination of Colonial Office Minutes has demonstrated this unequivocally. What most colonial officials rejected, although there were some important exceptions here too,[8] was the idea that paternalism in Malta was somehow crucial or vital for the welfare of the population. On the contrary, the general view was that the socio-economic circumstances of Malta were largely the result of paternalism rather than its cause. What was required, therefore, was not more paternalism which, as already noted, was considered to be an obstacle to development, but the dismantling of existing structures. Also required was an education that would encourage the Maltese to curb their prolific birth-rate and a disposition, among the redundant population, to settle in other, perhaps more distant, parts of the globe. It was such notions which had inspired the several British attempts, (to which reference was made earlier), to change the system of administration and to reduce offices in Malta.

Britain accepted, although it thought the Maltese position mistaken, that the latter tended to view the matter differently and that they attached a great deal of importance to their paternalistic institutions. Almost every Civil Commissioner or Governor who had served in Malta had, at one time or another, pressed this view on the Home authorities. From Ball (1803-9) to Plumer (1919), they nearly all held that British control over, and effective exploitation of, the strategic resource required a commitment, or sacrifice, on the part of Britain, towards Maltese welfare. In other words, they thought that it entailed a cost. Perhaps one of the most poignant statements of this view was that made by Governor Grant in



the 1860s (Chapter Nine) when he pleaded with the Secretary of State that, on grounds of 'good policy' Maltese sympathies towards the Mother Country should be 'specially fostered and maintained' and that the Maltese should be 'practically taught to look to Great Britain for all their benefits'.[9] There were, as we have seen others, some before and some later, who had pressed a similar point.[10] London was not oblivious to any of this for, as demonstrated a short while ago, whenever Britain was faced with an actual (as in 1800-1812), or impending (as after 1933), challenge to its possession of Malta, it did not hesitate to assume in Malta the role both of sponsor and promoter of paternal administration. In fact, British pursuit of its strategic - i.e. vested - interests, provides a partial explanation for continuity.

What emerges from this study, however, is that it was the British view that was flawed. In Malta, its socio-economic circumstances did make paternal administration necessary for the well-being of the inhabitants and more so under British rule than at any previous period in the history of the Islands. The evidence was there to be grasped! It was, for example, evident if one looked at the outcome of policies which were intended to chip away at the existing paternalistic structures. There was the tragic events of the 1820s and 30s which occurred partly as a result of the decision, taken in London, to open up the grain market in Malta to competition and to allow the levying of a tax on its sale.[11] The resulting tragedy might have been worse were it not that, at the time, the local government was still able to keep a stock of grain for the use of the population in such situations and hence, to intervene in the market to influence the price. The effects of this decision were, to a considerable degree, to continue to be felt throughout the period examined (see Chapters Six, Seven, Eight and Eleven).

It was also evident in those acts of defiance, overt or indirect, by Governors in respect of precise instructions from London to refrain from

implementing some measure or to suppress offices and departments. In this Chapter, though in a different context, we have already pointed to examples regarding the latter. With respect to the former, however, two examples would suffice. We had occasion to see, for example, in Chapter Five, Hastings' and Ponsonby's defiance of both the Treasury and the Colonial Office in respect of the House of Industry for girls, the creation of the Board of Health and the granting of pensions to public servants or their widows. In Chapter Ten, it was Borton's (and the elected members') determined opposition to both Rowsell's and Julyan's reforms which best expressed this defiance.

There was evidence of it in the constant recourse to schemes of public works in an effort to maintain people in employment; in the local government's reluctance either to charge the market value for its extensive property or to press its tenants, urban or rural, to pay the arrears on their rent; in its readiness to allow destitute persons to take up bed-space in the several hospitals that existed and in its unwillingness to apply British principles and methods of charitable relief; and, finally, in the creation of numerous useless offices in the public service to ease the unemployment situation among the Island's educated young men; or, indeed, in the government's reluctance to introduce new technologies, such as copy presses, which might make officers redundant. It may be tempting to dismiss these measures, as nearly every Commission did, as nothing less than an exercise in popularity hunting by the local administration. To an extent they were. We saw, in Chapter Six, George Cornwall Lewis writing of the 'intense'[12] hatred that the Maltese harboured against the British for depriving them of all the administrative offices. His solution, and that of his colleague John Austin, as Commissioners, was to hand back those offices to Maltese public servants stressing, among other things, the popularity that Britain would gain from this measure.[13] Thus, popularity had its political advantages. The fact was, however, that these measures were the

response of an impotent administration seeking mainly, though not exclusively, to help make the otherwise bleak life of its subjects, barely tolerable.

Further proof to sustain this argument can be found in the administrations of those Governors who were known opponents of paternalism, such as Maitland and Le Marchant, and who had declared their intention to systematically curb it. Thomas Maitland (Chapter Four) began his tenure openly declaring his intention to remodel the administration 'in toto' and away from its paternalistic structures. Nonetheless, we found him a few years later resisting Colonial Office instructions to suppress the government grain monopoly, on the ground, that such a measure might endanger the livelihood of the people and the tranquility of the colony; and creating government-sponsored cotton factories in Malta and Gozo in an effort to relieve some of the distress among the population. In 1858 Gaspard le Marchant too embarked on his administration with a scathing attack on the public service and a promise to liberalise it (Chapter Eight). He too tried to make good his promise, as his decision to suppress the high-spending Public Works Department and to introduce a system of tendering demonstrated. However, as we saw, not only economic conditions in Malta thwarted the Governor's plans, but in the following years they were to force him to intervene in the grain market, to stave off famine among the population, and to defend his generally paternalistic administration from Colonial Office criticism. It may be said, therefore, that notwithstanding their earlier efforts, both Maitland and Le Marchant proved to be no less paternalistic in their administrations than other Governors.

The reasons for this are clearly brought out in the text. The social and economic problems of Malta, i.e. unemployment, over-population, poverty and external dependence for food were chronic problems and applied to nearly every administration. It was in their degree of severity that they differed. We saw in this study that, by the first decades of the nineteenth

century, Malta had already lost those economic activities, mainly cotton and shipping, and revenues which, for centuries had largely maintained the population in employment. Moreover, the search for alternative industries had proved futile and, from around this time onwards, matters were complicated by the fact that the population graph began to show a steep rise which grew steadily steeper as the century wore on. Steam and the opening of the Suez Canal eased the situation, but only marginally, and mainly in the harbour areas. It was the fortress which in time became the focus of the Maltese economy. In fact, prosperity and depression became, as we also saw, inextricably linked with the level of British military and naval spending in Malta, mainly because this expenditure tended to increase during periods of international tension (as between 1890-1903) or war (as during the Crimean War), and decrease once the emergency had passed or been dealt with. This intricate link between Imperial spending in Malta and the actual social condition of the Maltese at any given time, was emphatically demonstrated by the Royal Commission of 1911-12 (Chapter Eleven). The Commission had concluded that, given the socio-economic conditions of Malta, without this expenditure or government aid the Maltese were 'almost helpless to meet'[14] and respond to what Julyan had called, their constant 'painful struggle for existence'.[15] In the face of these circumstances a move away from the existing paternalistic system of public administration was outside the realm of practical politics. The livelihood of the population depended in large measure on that administration and this explains the near-violent reaction, in 1878 (see Chapter Nine), of the labouring poor, to rumours that Rowsell had recommended its retrenchment; and the riots of 1919 (Chapter Twelve), which occurred at a time when even those in employment were suffering terribly from the effects of inflation. The valid conclusion that the above leads to is that, in Malta, paternalism was vital for the well being of the Maltese and that it was bound to remain so unless, of course, the socio-economic and, to a lesser degree, the

strategic circumstances of Malta were somehow changed. British rule had failed to do this. Hence, its failure to break the mould of the centuries-old system of administration. Hence the reason for continuity.

Continuity was also the result of vested interests. We have seen, a short while ago, how Britain's own strategic needs had helped to reinforce continuity. But there were others, notably public servants and persons with an education, who saw in change, or its prospect, a threat to their immediate interests. For the majority of civil servants, reform was generally associated with retrenchment and the likelihood of loss of office which, in the Maltese context, also meant long-term unemployment and loss of status. This explains why public servants in Malta continued, over the years, to obstruct Colonial Office attempts at reform. This was understandable given that the Maltese public service was almost the only source of stable employment for persons with an education. Persons of this description out the service, especially members of the profession, saw in retrenchment a dangerous narrowing of employment opportunities, either for themselves or for their sons. We did, in fact, see examples (e.g. Adrian Dingli in Chapter Seven and Arturo Mercieca in Chapter Eleven) of professional persons abandoning promising private careers for the security of public office; of how strong the demand and how harsh the competition was for offices in the public service; and of how large (Chapter Ten) the number of professional persons employed with the government was and the problems it eventually gave rise to. Hence, attempts at retrenchment tended to be also opposed by persons outside the service, an opposition which was generally articulated by the elected members. In the 1880s Governor Borton pleaded with London not to press with the reforms proposed by Julyan on the ground that the former, and many civil servants, were opposed to them.[16] The labouring poor, on whom the bulk of the burden of taxation mainly fell, feared, as we saw a little earlier, that retrenchment would result in the loss of some vital service or benefit. It was a situation which, as Rowsell

wrote in 1877, gave rise to a keen 'struggle among the generality for the existence of their class, and for individual existence within that class'.[17] Hence, in Malta, the maintenance of one's social status involved one in a stiff competition with others for the satisfaction of one's daily needs.

British attitudes to public service size and to language, because they appeared to threaten the interests of nearly every group and class in Malta, served to coalesce resistance to these unpopular policies. However, the keen struggle for existence, the result of the socio-economic circumstances of Malta, also created deep-rooted mutual distrust between these groups, with the result, that Maltese society and its public service, became deeply divided and fragmented. The source of this distrust was the struggle for control, over the administration and its resources, between the administrative elite and the political elite which took the form of a struggle for representative or responsible government. The general impression conveyed by this study is that senior civil servants were opposed to any notion of meaningful political reform. They held their position and salaries threatened if control over the administration and the revenue came to be vested in the hands of elected members. Of course, as we saw in Chapters Seven and Ten, civil servants never expressed their opposition to political reform in terms of vested interests, but in socio-political terms, i.e. the ignorance of the population and the likelihood of it being manipulated by unscrupulous persons bent on extending their power. But we saw how real civil fears were when we examined, in Chapter Twelve, Britain's decision to grant the Maltese a form of self-government. Ironically we also saw there how exaggerated these fears proved to be.

In like manner the political elite too, held its interests to be at risk as long as control over local affairs remained under the jurisdiction of the local administration and the Colonial Office. The behaviour of some

Governors, such as Le Marchant, the decision to alter the system of taxation (Chapter Nine) and to replace Italian with English as the official language, merely heightened these fears. Hence, their determined struggle, since 1800, to achieve their end. This, inevitably brought them into conflict with the administrative elite who were equally determined to obstruct political reform. Indigenization and smallness also tended to make this conflict more divisive and bitter. Indigenization removed the traditional pattern to be found in Crown Colonies and in India of a local elite seeking to oust and replace a foreign administrative elite with that of a local political elite seeking to wrest power from a local administrative elite. Hence, the conflict divided the population, the public service and even families.[18] Smallness complicated matters further, not only because of the ease with which the whole population could be mobilised, but also because defeat for one side or another involved loss of face with that population. Herbert, at the Colonial Office, had made this (Chapter Ten), quite clearly. Sutton has argued that whenever conflict occurs in small states it tends to be both personal in form and strident in tone.[19] We have seen this to be true in Malta, especially in the case of Dingli, of Savona and of Strickland. He has also argued that conflict tends to result in the avoidance of decision-making. This view was emphatically confirmed, in 1919, by Amery (Chapter Twelve) who reported that, in the circumstances of Malta, indigenization and smallness, had resulted in administrative paralysis.

The final issue which needs to be addressed is whether, given the impact of the socio-economic and strategic circumstances of Malta and the extensive system of paternalism to which they gave rise, the role of public servants in Malta was "dirigiste" in character. It was demonstrated, in the Introduction, that colonies which did not enjoy self-government were, in nearly every sense, bureaucratically governed colonies. Indeed, we saw there that, in these colonies, some civil servants tended to see themselves

as nothing less than 'despots',[20] albeit, benevolent ones. On the basis of this argument it was assumed that Maltese civil servants would also fit this description, but, more so in their case, because of the special circumstances of Malta. One cannot say from what has emerged from this study that this assumption is supported by the evidence.

A dirigiste civil service is one which controls and gives direction to the social, economic and political spheres of public life in a colony. That is one which, through its own decision-making processes arrives at, and seeks to implement identifiable policies. Whether these policies succeed, or prove to be the right policies, is not the issue. What is at issue is whether these policies originate from within the civil service or from some other source. Examples of such policies are hard to come by in the case of the Maltese public service, unless, of course, one includes under this category its staunch defence of the status quo. In fact, the nearest that the local service ever came to having a policy of sorts was in the 1820s (Chapter Five) when, in the face of one of the gravest crises of the nineteenth century, it sought to organize emigration to the West Indies and to encourage the setting up, in Malta, of certain industries. Emigration, in fact, remained a central concern of the administration throughout the period under review and, as we saw in Chapter Twelve, in the first decades of the twentieth century a Department of Emigration was established. Nonetheless, it is difficult, on the basis of one policy to categorize the Maltese civil service as dirigiste or political-managerial. The factors which contributed to civil service inertia have all been discussed immediately above and nothing further needs to be added.

Many of the insights that we have gained through this study of the development of the Maltese public service in the period 1800-1940 would, probably, have been lost had we not sought to examine that development in the light of the administrative politics of Malta. This would also probably apply in the case of studies, whenever they are undertaken, of the Maltese



public service in the post-World War Two period. Although, as already noted at the very end of Chapter Twelve, some of the predominant issues of this latter period were different (e.g. class rather than language politics), other issues, such as public service size or the implications for Malta of the fortress, remained equally predominant. Indeed, while on the surface much seems to have changed in Malta, much that is crucial and important has remained unaltered or unaffected by these apparent changes.

One apparent change is that, in Malta, affluence seems to have finally triumphed over poverty. Yet, the dependence of the people on the state is greater and the public service larger today than it has ever been at any time in the past. Indeed, the government today accounts for nearly 48% of all those gainfully occupied and, indirectly, for the incomes of a substantial proportion of workers employed in industries which supply services to the government. The reasons for this state of affairs are complex and cannot be dealt with adequately here. But they are mostly the result of a combination of the special socio-economic circumstances which we have examined in this study, and of the intense political party competition which has characterized Maltese politics since independence in 1964.

The fortress, on the insistence of the Malta government, ended its operations in Malta in 1979. Although, as Map 13:1 demonstrates, it still commanded extensive importance in the life of the island at independence, cuts in British defence spending in the 1950s had already signalled its decline. After 1967 this decline became more accentuated. Local governments, faced with massive unemployment and potential unrest, were forced to take over some of the activities, such as the dockyards, relinquished by the British. Hence, as the number of those dependent on the fortress for their livelihood shrunk, the number of those dependent on the government expanded.

A second important factor was the impact of imported inflation,



international recession and political or military crisis in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. From around 1955 onwards successive Maltese governments have sought to diversify the economy from its exclusive dependence on the fortress. This policy gave rise to new corporations and departments, such as the Department of Economic Planning and the Malta Development Corporation. In time mass tourism, light manufacturing industries and transshipment became the mainstays of the Maltese economy. But, because of the fact that Malta still requires to import the bulk of its dietary and raw material requirements, each of these activities have served to stress the dependent nature of the island's economy even further. This has made Malta's economy particularly open to the vicissitudes of the international economy. Thus, slump and depression, have continued to form an integral part of Maltese economic life. Governments of every shade have, increasingly, taken it upon themselves to try and mitigate the effects of outside economic forces on the domestic economy. One important measure has been the creation of the Bulk Buying Division - a sort of modern-day Università - which is responsible for the importation, in bulk, of essential items of food and a number of raw materials, including timber. Other government corporations enjoy monopoly control on the supply and distribution of energy products.[21] Finally, governments have invested and continue to hold, majority stakes in enterprises in every sector of the economy.

A third explanation is political and ideological. As in Britain, the year 1947 saw in Malta the establishment of the modern welfare state, with the introduction of compulsory schooling, old age and sickness benefits and wider health provision. Given that, in Malta, the role of the state in these areas had always been relatively high, it may be legitimate to argue that postwar government policy had served, merely, to transform charity into statutory provision. After 1964 the intense party struggle for power led to the abandonment of means testing and the introduction of the

practice of universality in the provision of family, health, education and other services. Indeed, the state in Malta today not only provides many of the welfare services found in the advanced industrial nations but also free private education for those who want it.

While such policies have inevitably resulted in a much larger bureaucracy the attempt to finance these policies have rendered the bureaucracy even bigger. In fact, the post-war years have seen the creation of the Inland Revenue Department, to administer the income tax system established in 1948, and government takeover of all commercial banks and other profit-making services, such as telecommunications, which previously existed as private corporation.

It may be said, by way of conclusion, that, by and large, this study and the foregoing both seem to confirm Lowenthal's view that 'the smaller the state the larger its government looms in its economy and society'. [22] However, they do seem to question the IMF's hypothesis, certainly in the case of Malta, that it is those countries that have been most influenced by the British colonial system of government which tend 'to employ larger numbers of government civil servants in administration than do other countries'. [23] Whatever the cause, however, it seems certain that, in the future, unless there is a radical shift of policy, and circumstances, the Maltese public service is destined to grow further.

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17. Rowsell's Report, in Correspondence Respecting the Taxation and Expenditure of Malta, (1878), C-2032, HMSO, London, p.4.
18. In most Crown Colonies the upper echelons of the civil service were filled by officers recruited from Britain, a state of affairs which, with the exception of India and one or two other colonies, remained unchanged until the 1940s.
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20. E. Blunt, (1973), The Indian Civil Service, Faber & Faber, London, p.262.
21. Oil and gas products are imported by Enemalta, a public corporation, which enjoys a monopoly.
22. D. Lowenthal, in Clarke and Payne, op.cit., p.43.
23. P. Sutton, as above, p.13.

## APPENDIX A

### GOVERNORS OF MALTA (1813-1940)

1813-1824	Lieut-General the Honourable Sir Thomas Maitland
1824-1826	General the Marquess of Hastings
1827-1836	Major-General the Honourable Sir Frederick Ponsonby
1836-1843	Lieut-General Sir Henry Bouverie
1843-1847	Lieut-General Sir Patrick Stuart
1847-1851	The Rt Honourable Richard More O'Ferrall
1851-1858	Major-General Sir William Reid
1858-1864	Lieut-General Sir John Gaspard Le Marchant
1864-1867	Lieut-General Sir Henry Storks
1867-1872	General Sir Patrick Grant
1872-1878	General Sir Charles van Straubenzee
1878-1884	General Sir Arthur Borton
1884-1888	General Sir J.A. Lintorn Simmons
1888-1890	Lieut-General Sir Henry Torrens
1890-1893	Lieut-General Sir Henry Smyth
1893-1899	General Sir Arthur Fremantle
1899-1903	Lieut-General Lord Grenfell
1903-1907	General Sir Mansfield Clarke
1907-1909	Lieut-General Sir Henry Grant
1909-1915	General Sir Leslie Rundle
1915-1919	Field-Marshal Lord Metheun
1919-1924	Field-Marshal Viscount Plumer
1924-1927	General Sir Walter Congreve
1927-1931	General Sir John du Cane
1931-1936	General Sir David Campbell
1936-1940	General Sir Charles Bonham-Carter
1940-1942	Lieut-General Sir William Dobbie

## APPENDIX B

### SECRETARIES OF STATE FOR WAR AND THE COLONIES (1812-1852)

1812 Earl Bathurst  
1827 F.J. Robinson (Viscount Goderich)  
1828 Sir George Murray  
1830 Viscount Goderich  
1833 E.G. Stanley  
1834 Thomas Spring Rice  
1835 Charles Grant (Lord Glenelg)  
1839 Lord John Russell  
1841 Lord Stanley (Earl of Derby)  
1835 William E. Gladstone  
1846 Earl Grey  
1852 Sir John S. Pakington  
1852 Duke of Newcastle

### SECRETARIES OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES (1854-1940)

1854 June 10 Sir G. Grey, Bt  
1855 February Sidney Herbert  
1855 March Lord John Russell  
1855 July 21 Sir William Molesworth  
1855 November 17 Henry Labouchere  
1858 February 26 Lord Stanley (Earl of Derby)  
1858 May 31 Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton  
1859 June 18 Duke of Newcastle  
1864 April 4 Edward Cardwell (Viscount Cardwell)  
1866 July 6 Earl of Carnarvon  
1867 March 8 Duke of Buckingham  
1868 December 10 Earl Granville  
1870 July 6 Earl of Kimberley  
1874 February 21 Earl of Carnarvon  
1878 February 4 Sir Michael E. Hicks Beach  
1880 April 28 Earl of Kimberley  
1882 December 16 Earl of Derby  
1885 June 24 Colonel F.A. Stanley  
1886 February 6 Earl Granville  
1886 August 3 Edward Stanhope  
1887 January 14 Sir Henry Holland (Baron Knutsford, Viscount Knutsford)  
1892 August 17 Marquess of Ripon  
1895 June 28 Joseph Chamberlain  
1903 October 9 Alfred Lyttleton  
1905 December 11 Earl of Elgin and Kincardine  
1908 April 16 Earl of Crewe  
1910 November 7 Lewis Harcourt (Viscount Harcourt)  
1915 May 27 A. Bonar Law  
1916 December 11 W.H. Long  
1919 January 14 Viscount Milner  
1921 February 14 Sir Winston Churchill  
1922 October 25 Duke of Devonshire  
1924 January 23 J.H. Thomas  
1924 November 7 L.C. Amery  
1929 June 8 Lord Passfield  
1931 August 26 J.H. Thomas  
1931 November 9 Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister  
1935 June 7 Malcolm MacDonald  
1935 November 27 J.H. Thomas  
1936 May 29 W.G.A. Ormsby-Gore  
1938 May 16 Malcolm MacDonald  
1940 May 13 Lord Lloyd

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  - b. Confidential Despatches to Secretary of State, Vol.11 and Vol.13.
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b. Legislative Assembly (1921-1933)

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